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My faith is enough

MY FAITH IS ENOUGH

ALAN WALKER

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by

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PREFACE

"There is no demand of the human heart which Jesus Christ cannot meet," was the claim made one day by my theological teacher, Dr. Kenneth Edward. "This is why the Christian Faith belongs to East and West and why no greater than Jesus will ever come. No one else is required."

These words, more than any others, were the beginning of this book. Since they were uttered, nearly twenty years have passed. In my own experience they have been proved true. In the lives of countless others whose confidences I have been given they have been verified. Thus far, in my own life and in the varied experiences of others, faith in Jesus has been enough. It has built up a confidence which enables me to believe that, however the years may lengthen, and come what may, I shall ever be able to say: "My Faith is enough."

In these pages, then, I want to try to show how Jesus Christ grows with a growing life. He is enough for us all when we are very young, as we enter the turbulent experiences of the teen-ager, as our careers take shape and the years lengthen. And He is enough for the sudden changes and shocks that come; sorrow, reverses of fortune, loneliness, fear, defeat, victory, death. It all leads me to believe that, when at last we stand looking back over the years, we shall repeat with all life's evidence before us: "My Faith was enough."

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CHAPTER I

Faith at the Beginning

My Faith was enough before I was born. As that claim sounds a little strange, let me explain what I mean. Life begins for every one of us, not at birth, but at the moment of conception. At once the new life is subject to influences which, for good or evil, have their effect. Immediately, the atmosphere of a home, the environment of the family and the faith of a mother and father exercise their gentle pressures. Faith, doubt, fear, serenity, confidence all begin to count. Life has begun and life is never lived in isolation. All this means that God's Spirit at once has access to the new life that is coming into being.

No one can work among people without realising the tremendous effect of low-grade home life upon personality. From the moment of conception to adulthood, home-influences are all important. Behind so many personality disorders and domestic tensions lie unhappy childhood and home experiences. Every man who is at work among people is always looking into the background of those who come to him for help and guidance.

I think, for example, of experiences over the past year. I think of the number of young delinquents whose background,

in each case, is a divided, broken home. I remember the hour when, with sobs rending his body, a young man told of his attempted suicide because he had discovered he was an illegitimate child. I can see the shame of a young girl who had found that the man whom she had thought was her father was not her mother's husband. I can recall life after life over which a heavy cloud has hung for years because parents, in a divided home, have pitilessly used their child as a "buffer." And there have been many whose own marriage and home-life have become tense and strained through causes which date back to the unhappiness or to the divorce of their own parents.

If there is anything we have learned in the last fifty years, it is of the importance of the early years in the life of a child. Back and back modern child psychology has pushed the years in which experiences take place which vitally affect personality, until now we say that it is in the first few years of life that the pattern of life and character begins firmly to form. If this is true, home-life is more important than ever for, in the early years of a child's life, home is almost the only influence that plays upon personality.

Thomas Hardy, the English novelist, saw this clearly. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* he says of the Durbyfield home and children: "All these young souls were passengers in the Durbyfield ship—entirely dependent on the judgment of the two Durbyfield adults for their pleasures, their necessities, their health, even their existence. If the heads of the household chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, death, thither went these half-dozen little captives under hatches, compelled to sail with them."

There is no nursery in all the world to equal that of a deeply religious Christian home. The sense of an Authority beyond the authority of parents gives a child confidence. The positive faith of a Christian home adds serenity and puts all that happens in a balanced perspective. The quiet culture, the introduction given to the finest elements of our heritage, enrich beyond calculation. And there is offered that priceless sense of values which gives a basis of judgment as the years unfold.

A Christian faith causes parents to hold an innate respect for a little life which is not only their child, but a child of God. Also it gives to every child a sense of being wanted and of having a place in the world. There is many a little child who has dropped to sleep with a sense of warmth and security because he has learned to sing: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." He senses he is not an orphan in a vast universe, but a little child of God.

There is no doubt that there are still many homes which fail to put little children first. There are far too many parents who feel they have a right to possess and coerce their children. Parents who dream their own dreams for their children, forcing them into careers and occupations from which the young people themselves shrink, are by no means rare.

A fine story is told of the famous dancer, Anna Pavlova. One night a well-meaning woman, the wife of a local notability, managed to secure entrance to Pavlova's dressing room after a performance. The fond mother had brought her little girl, aged six, to present a bouquet.

Pavlova accepted the flowers, stooped and kissed the little upturned face and then, in sudden anger, turned on the mother. "How dare you?" she said. "How dare you bring such a tiny child to me at midnight? She should be home in bed long ago."

The mother looked at the great dancer in amazement. "Go!" said Pavlova. "Take the little one away to bed! Her eyes can scarcely open."

The crestfallen mother, having put her own purposes before the interests of her child, and having no reply, hurried away before the well-deserved rebuke.

I once heard a very prominent Australian educationist say that the best home-environment a child could have was a home of strong and simple piety. His reason was that such a home gave the growing children a sound and positive faith. "It is like giving a boy a pocket-knife and a piece of wood to hack at and make a boat. What he makes may be very different from the kind of boat his parents may imagine,

but because a tool and material were in his hand, he does make something." The ultimate Faith or philosophy of life which a man comes to hold may be very different from the Faith of the home from which he has come, but that ultimate Faith will be the finer for having been fashioned from something given in childhood.

The greatest lack in many a modern home is the absence of faith. The only approach to life that is presented to growing children is negative and critical, or a concentration on trifling—if not worthless—pursuits. Children from such homes grow up with no faith. They are easy prey to that which is false and dangerous. Into the vacuum press life's poorer values and interests. A faithless home is indeed a poverty-stricken home.

Many people fear, of course, that a home of strong Christian faith conditions—one of today's blessed words—the mind of a child and restricts his mental and emotional development. Therefore, it is strangely argued so often that a child must not have pressed upon him any knowledge of the Christian Faith. He ought not be linked with a Sunday school or a Church, it is said, "till he chooses for himself."

I suppose there are homes which are religiously oppressive and narrowly restrictive, but the peril of these homes is nothing to equal the peril of nihilism, of negativism, of a shallow emptiness.

But, any way, this idea of waiting till children are older and can choose for themselves is a tragic fallacy. While we pause to make up our minds, our lives are made up for us by the pressures crushing in upon us. A child's opinions may be held in suspense but character cannot be suspended. It is not that we choose to be free or to accept life's conditioning processes. It is only a question of whether we deliberately see to it that a positive Faith is advanced or that the emptiness of no-faith, which, in practice, means the lowest common factors of a cultural environment, fashions a child's thinking. Thus, I repeat again, a home of no-faith is a mean, a vulnerable, a shallow home.

If any home is restrictive, it is the home without spiritual

horizons. Bounded by time, lacking the far hills of eternity, it is narrow and limited in the deepest sense. On the other hand, a truly Christian home is a home which is enriched by the great treasures of Christian tradition, of literature, of the hymns of the Churches, of the heroes of Christian history and the universal fellowship of the Church. Restricted? The home which fails to allow all this to flow in through the doors and windows which faith opens is the narrow home! The adequate home, as I know well, is the home through which sound the over-tones of religious conviction and in which is breathed the free atmosphere of the Spirit of God.

One of the amazing facts of these modern days is the spiritual neglect of little children. Parents who themselves know the Christian story because it was taught to them as children, deny their children a similar privilege. Having grown up in the varied fellowship of the Church themselves, they close this very door to those they love. Parents who plan and sacrifice in order to give the best to the children they love think nothing of robbing their children of the most priceless heritage our civilisation possesses, the Christian Faith. So there is some justification for Dr. Elsie Harrison's comment: "Today, children's souls are as under-exercised and as unfed as ever bodies were in the bad old days, and the neglect is more abundantly cruel in so far as souls are more precious than bodies."

In my father's home the lovely practice of family prayers was part of each day's life. No one who seeks to cope with little children will minimise the difficulties of trying to pray with them daily. The difficulties, under modern conditions, of getting together as a family either in the morning or the evening, coupled with the noise and movement which usually come from the younger members of the home, conspire, so often, to silence the voice of prayer around the family altar. Yet such difficulties must not be allowed to destroy that altar.

Dr. William Temple, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, writing fifty years after his childhood, once paid a moving tribute to the power of family prayers in his life. "I am constantly thinking," he wrote, "of the enormous difference

that it must have made that from a date before we could clearly remember things, we heard some verses of the Bible read every day. Probably three times out of five we did not directly attend to it: but it was flowing over our growing minds, even when attention wandered, and it must have been producing a great effect in making natural and spontaneous that whole outlook upon life which the Bible expresses."

Standing on my desk is a book which I cherish more than anything else I possess. It is the Bible which my father and mother gave me on my first birthday. It has an inscription in it which reads simply: "To our son on his first birthday, with prayers that this Book may be the guide of his life."

Looking back, I am grateful beyond measure that before I was born there was faith, strong and wholesome, waiting to enfold me. I know beyond the shadow of doubting that, face to face with the tasks of home-making, every mother and father can say: "My Faith is enough."

CHAPTER 2

A Time for Decision

If anything is true of our teen-age years, it is that, during them, we face a time for decision. During the vital years of adolescence, choices must be made which affect us for the rest of our lives. Early comes the decision to follow either a technical or a classical course of education. Soon the first tentative decisions are made concerning vocation, profession, career. It is in these years that we move toward political allegiances. Loyalties that are made often remain for life. In later adolescence we begin relationships which presently will issue in marriage. Adolescence is a time for decision.

It is in the teen-age period that an even more fundamental decision is faced. It relates to a philosophy for our life. Adolescence is the great time for religious decision. For those of us who have grown up in a Christian home, issues eventually focus themselves in such a way that religion either remains an unreal, second-hand experience or it becomes a vital first-hand possession. Others of us who have not had the privilege of a Christian background nevertheless are often confronted with Christ in these years. An investigation has proved that adolescence is, more than any other period, the time for conversion. It is in these years, so often, that God in Jesus Christ can break through with great power and we make the choice to follow Jesus Christ always.

May I briefly recount my own experience during these years? It was before adolescence, as a child, that I pledged my life to Jesus Christ. It was largely, of course, an immature and uninformed decision. Yet it was vivid and real and abiding. It was during adolescence that the Christian Faith became filled out for me with content and power. I began to realise how strong is the Christian's intellectual position, how attractive is the person of Jesus, how great is the range of the Christian Faith, encompassing not only personal but social issues, and how deeply Jesus Christ can satisfy the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

Let me, then, give reasons why the Christian Faith proves its power to challenge us all on the threshold of adulthood. Let me outline why I believe young people can so confidently choose Christ, and Christ alone.

The Christian Faith, with belief in God at its centre, is the most satisfying, most intellectually decent, explanation of life that there is.

An acceptance of the fact of God is perhaps the most important decision we can ever make. After all, the God we worship determines the kind of people we become. Faith in God, if it is real, penetrates into every phase of our lives and determines judgments on almost every issue that comes to us. Similarly, the rejection of God, agnosticism or atheism, has its influence on everything else that we think or do. Whether there is a God or not is the most important question in the world.

An illustration of how far-reaching is our conclusion about the fact of God comes from the life of the late H. G. Wells. Early in his life he became convinced that there was no God. The consequence of this decision worked itself out most fully at the end of his days. His last book was significantly called *Mind at the End of Its Tether.*

Because, in his view, there is no God whose providential care is over all things, H. G. Wells, by his own irresistible logic, was forced to recognise that all meaning and purpose disappeared from life. He came to the conclusion: "The end of everything is close at hand and cannot be evaded. There is no way out, or around, or through, the impasse. It is the end. Our universe is not merely bankrupt; it is going clear out of existence. The attempt to trace a pattern of any kind is absolutely futile." He further described our world as: "A convoy lost in darkness off an unknown rocky coast, with quarrelling pilots in the chart room and savages clambering up the sides of the ships to plunder and to do evil, as the whim may take them."

The time has come to recognise that it is he who disbelieves in God who must really prove his case. Faith in God can be held with great confidence. Life is so complex that no neat answer can be found which solves every problem. Pain

and evil and death pose questions which no-one finds easy to answer. The Christian Faith, with its belief in an Intelligence behind all things and in a God who has purpose in creation, and with its gospel of immortality, goes nearer to solving these basic philosophic questions than does any other theory or philosophy.

Life remains unsatisfactory until we find an overall view or interpretation of existence. Something like a thread that draws a string of beads together must bind the days and the years, if those days and years are to have meaning and significance. To choose the Christian Faith is to find a conviction about life which is great enough to encompass and absorb the whole of life.

Christianity is Jesus Christ. As is true of no other religion of the world, the Christian Faith is centred in its Founder. From His life, teaching, death and resurrection flow the influences which have made the Christian religion the most powerful force the world has ever known. It is in Jesus Christ that Christianity has its greatest asset. He is another mighty argument why, in the time for decision, the Christian Faith can be our choice.

When I went to school, there was an English teacher there who had a particular method in dealing with Shakespeare's plays. He demanded that we should develop a character picture of each Shakespearean figure by placing his, or her, name at the top of a page and then outline a personality characteristic and give evidence for it by quoting from the play. If we do this with Jesus Christ, we discover why He makes so tremendous an appeal to us as young people, and to us all.

With what commanding courage Jesus of Nazareth comes before us! He knows, for example, that to go to Jerusalem will mean persecution and almost certain death. Yet the day comes when, quietly, He informs His disciples that He is heading for Jerusalem. Steadily, with intellectual discernment of what it means, He goes on towards the city which has stoned the prophets before Him. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, it is possible for Him to slip away to safety, but

he chooses to remain. The moral courage of Jesus stands out on almost every page of the Gospels.

Not only strength but sympathy and tenderness are seen in Jesus. Some people's strength of leadership has often lacked tenderness and human insight, but Jesus fulfils Tennyson's lines: "That gentleness which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man."

We do not often comment upon the intellectual stature of Jesus, yet how tremendous was His mind! His penetrating insight is seen in the way by which He saw into the meaning of life and the way to live. We have heard that selfishness kills and that sacrifice brings new life, that only by forgiveness do we get rid of enemies, that the meek shall inherit the earth, that they that take the sword shall, in the end, die by the sword. We often forget that these insights, so revolutionary in their emphasis, come from Jesus. Think of how, in a sentence, He summed up a whole religion: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbour as thyself." And what can be said of His parables? A first reading reveals their truth, and yet no reading finally plumbs their depth. There was never a mind like His mind!

What shall we say of the divine mystery of the nature of Jesus? From the first disciples onward, men have experienced that which lies behind Martin Luther's comment: "We take hold of Jesus as a man and find He is God." Jesus becomes too great for our ordinary categories of thought and definition. Inevitably, we find that He fulfills in our lives the function that normally belongs only to God. Many of us know similar experiences to those described by Dr. Russell Maltby: "As the early Christians said their prayers to God at night, they found another face on the screen of their minds and fell asleep thinking of Jesus."

"If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man—I say
That of all mankind
I cleave to Him.

If Jesus Christ is a God
And the only God—I swear

I will follow Him through heaven and hell
The earth, the sea, the air."

Sometime ago, in the University of Oklahoma in U.S.A., it was my task to debate with a Professor of the University the subject: "Is the world worth saving?" My answer had to be that the world, as we know it in its present organisation, is not worth saving, but it is worth changing.

There is far too much talk about saving the world; all too little about changing the world. Yet how can we be satisfied with life as it is? Only half of the human family has enough to eat. For example, take a comparison between Australia and our nearest northern neighbour, Indonesia. Here in Australia, on an average, every man, woman and child enjoys an income of £350 per year. In Indonesia the income for each man, woman and child averages £17 per year. Only half of the human family can yet read or write. And what can we say of war? During the last 200 years a war has broken out somewhere every four years. Then, again, while the Christian Church is now established in almost every land, not more than half of the human family has heard of Jesus Christ. How, in such a world, can we talk glibly about saving it? It is a changed world that we need.

What forces are available for changing the world? There are those who would trust to economic re-arrangement. But economic changes, while necessary at many points, do not get to the seat of the problem. Economic change can be merely a re-arrangement of the scenery of life. Political change, unless it is the reflection of deep moral convictions, can so often be little more than a shift of power from one group to another. There is some point in the quaint comment of Studdert Kennedy: "To change the Government is only to put one lot of sinners out and to put another lot of sinners in." Revolution seems to create change, but it releases such unpredictable forces into history and society, and it so destroys the continuity of man's heritage, that its violence must be suspect. Each of these methods of change brings repercussions and consequences which usually wipe out all the gains that the method seems to secure at first.

History proves that Christianity can, and does, change the world. It was not long after the Christian Faith was first preached that the exposure of little children in the ancient world of Greece and Rome ceased and a new dignity and worth were given to womanhood. It was the Christian gospel which brought to an end gladiatorial combat in the Roman Empire. Later again, Christian faith and idealism ended the institution of slavery. It is part of the record of the Christian Faith that it has been able to fashion a new conscience in man and out of that conscience has come evolutionary progress. Transformations have come through the working of the Christian Faith which have been free from the evil consequences that belong to some other methods of change.

The Christian Faith satisfies the idealism of youth. It gives us goals and methods which can call forth the best that is in the toughest fighter for his fellows. It is the Kingdom of God and all that it represents that becomes another reason for choosing Christ in the time for decision. At least let me say this one personal word. If, today, in the name of Christ, I could not witness for peace and struggle against war, I question whether I could be a Christian. The time has come for mankind to be summoned for the greatest crusade of all history, the crusade against war. Because mankind has never known a world without the institution of war, there is a basic acceptance of it. The very institution of war, with its armies and navies and air forces, must be rejected and banished, just as, in the end, men turned against the institution of slavery. Now is the time to begin the all-out crusade against war so that, steadily, a conscience will be built up against it which will finally overthrow it.

It is for intensely personal reasons that we can choose Christ in the fateful years of adolescence. He does answer the basic personal problems of all young men and women. At the base of our personal problems is a single dilemma which confronts us all. It is the dilemma posed by the difference between our standards and our achievements, between our ideals and our day-to-day living, between our yearnings after goodness and the realistic fact of our weaknesses. It is the problem of how to be what we want to be in our best moments.

It is at this point that we soon discover the rather startling fact that knowledge is not necessarily power. To know a thing is not necessarily to do it. Young people, grappling with the tempestuous problems that relate to physical desire, know what is right but cannot always do it. There is something more than knowledge needed if we are to become master of our own lives and destiny. We recognise that something must come to us from beyond for, limited to our own strength, we are so often helpless.

The name the Christian gives to Jesus is "Saviour." He recognises that Jesus Christ does more than increase our knowledge about the way to live. He offers the power by which we can walk each day of our lives. Through the worship of God, by prayer and in imaginative fellowship with Jesus Christ, we find a strength which enables us to walk the white road of conscience, overcoming our temptations and our sin. It is through Christ, through full commitment to Him, that we link up with the one force in the universe which can give victory to us all.

In Alan Paton's book, *Cry the Beloved Country*, there is a story of an old Negro minister, who with his wife and his only son, lived away in the hills. One day the boy announced that he was going to Johannesburg to seek his fortune. Sorrowfully, his old parents watched him go. For a time, letters came back. Then they ceased. At last, the old Negro minister set off to the city to look for his son. He was met in Johannesburg by a city Negro minister who offered him help. For a week they sought to pick up the trail of the lost boy. One morning, after receiving a further kindness from his new friend, the man from the hills turned to the city Negro minister and said: "Oh, but you are wonderfully kind." The city man drew himself up and rather gruffly answered: "I am not kind. I am a selfish and sinful man, but Jesus Christ has placed His hand on me, that is all."

In a sense, that is all. It is why, supremely, faith is enough. It is the overwhelming reason why, as we pass through the fateful passage of adolescence, we must choose Christ.

CHAPTER 3

Life Has a Purpose

Sooner or later, as we go on our way, we must find a purpose for living. Some thread of meaning must draw together our days and the years. For most of the time, of course, we avoid thinking about ultimate goals and purposes, but sometimes we stop and ask: "What is life for, anyway?" Our Faith must enable us to say: "Life has a purpose."

At the heart of our need today is how to find this purpose for living. The fact is that futility and meaninglessness have spread far through the world. The war, of course, cloaked the emptiness but now, as peace lengthens, puzzling questions arise. Our literature, for example, reveals the hollowness of much of modern life. To his first great poem, T. S. Eliot gave the name, "The Wasteland." Satre called one of his powerful modern dramas, "No Exit." Popular plays and films, such as "The Death of a Salesman" and "Street Car Named Desire," reveal fundamental meaninglessness and despair.

To plunge into the atmosphere and the ideas of the New Testament is to enter a completely new world. In the first century of the Christian era there was a glad sense of purpose. Among the first Christians there was a knowledge of where they were going. It all came, of course, from Jesus.

From the beginning to the end of His life, He had an overmastering sense of purpose. At the first glimpse we get of Him as a boy of twelve, He says simply: "Wist you not that I must be about My Father's business?" During His ministry He states: "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me."

What, then, is the purpose for living? Which goals can we establish so that we may move steadily toward them as the years pass?

Do you remember a question and answer that you probably learned in Sunday School days? "What is the chief end of man?" "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." In other words, in this simple yet noble sentence the claim is made that one of the purposes of life, indeed its chief purpose, is to come to know God and explore His nature and purpose.

Our emphasis today is not on penetrating deeper into the inner meaning of the universe. Most of modern man's interest is on pushing further and further outward in an effort to increase our knowledge of the created universe. We are far more interested in how the world works than why. Science and techniques, rather than philosophy and religion, grip our interest. Yet it can only be as we answer the question "Why?" that we can find purpose and meaning for existence.

The supreme purpose for living is to find and know God. There is in our lives what Aldous Huxley has called "a God-shaped-blank." Only God can fill the shape of God in our own hearts. Until He comes, we have missed the climax of living. It is when we know God and begin to explore His love and His purpose that we, in turn, find the sense of the significance of living; we have "arrived."

The Roman Catholic saint, the Cure d'Ars, tells of an old peasant whom he knew in his French parish. He noticed that the old man would often slip into the church and stay for as long as two hours. Once the priest asked his parishioner what he did kneeling for so long before the altar. "I just looks at God and He looks at me," was the reply.

In our practical and shallow age we probably smile at such

a story, hardly understanding what it means. Yet it in part answers the query as to the meaning of life. "What is the chief end of man?" "Man's chief end, or purpose, is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever."

There is one fact which emerges clearly from the study of some of the greatest lives in history. It is that a sense of mission gave to them their certainty and their driving power.

We think of Abraham Lincoln watching a slave market in one of the Southern States of America and saying quietly: "If ever I get the chance to hit this thing, I'll hit it hard!" Albert Schweitzer, now an old man, was asked on a recent trip to England why he was returning to Africa, why he had gone there in the first place. Schweitzer thought for a moment and then gave his answer. "I had to do something for Christ," he said. The supreme example is, of course, Jesus Himself. Even as a child He was able to say: "I must be about My Father's business."

The acceptance of a task to be accomplished gives meaning to every-day life. For example, it is significant that, in war-time, the suicide rate drops noticeably. With men and women caught up into an immediate objective, each life is enfolded with greater meaning. Dr. L. P. Jacks says of England at war: "War has brought a peace of mind to England such as she has not possessed for generations. It is the peace of mind which comes to every one who, after tossing among uncertainties, finds, at last, a mission, a cause, to which he can devote himself, body and soul." It is one of the tragedies of our nature that war, rather than peace, seems able to define objectives and to draw forth the loyalties of men and women.

In the great dream of the Kingdom of God each one of us is given a mission, a task. The greatest cause that has ever broken upon human consciousness is the vision of the Kingdom of God. Beside it, the kingdom of Communism, the kingdom of the National State, the kingdom of Science, the kingdom of Democracy are pale by comparison. In the scope of its challenge it is enough for the hardest fighter.

Think, for example, of the way in which the Kingdom of God answers the very cries that are most on the lips of men

and women today. Man today is crying out for racial equality. In the Kingdom of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ. Modern man is yearning for a greater measure of freedom, chafing more than ever under any shackle that binds. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Modern man cries out for social and economic justice. The great rule of the Kingdom of God on earth is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." All over the world common people are speaking peace and demanding peace. The Lord of the Kingdom of God is called "The Prince of Peace."

In the service of the Kingdom of God life finds its purpose. The Kingdom of God, a theme so frequently on the lips of Jesus, enfolds life with a meaning.

In the significant story of what followed the visit of the twelve-year-old Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem another understanding of the meaning of life emerges. It says that Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. In other words, another purpose in living is to grow in maturity and to develop in personality.

A baby has virtually no personality. It is only stuff from which personality is made. Over the years, life's experiences, the decisions made, the influences that come, fashion life with sure fingers. A purpose for living is to seek the power of the living God that His fingers may do the fashioning. And the model to be used is the perfect nature of Jesus Christ. As the English poet, Keats, put it: "Call this world, if you will, a vale of soul-making."

If we are honest with ourselves, how disturbed and disappointed with ourselves we shall be. So many of us remain infantile in reactions and immature in outlook. How easily depressed we are! How ungracious we are! Our self-centredness and our hurt pride certainly make us hard to live with. We continue to be undisciplined, children of moods, and the victims of our uncurbed instinctive desires. Impurity in thought and imagination continues to plague us over the years and many of us are conquering our tempers no more today than we were ten years ago. We are failing to grow towards maturity.

One of our problems in living is always to have ideals above the average standard of the society in which we live. We say that we are as good as our neighbours, or as good as the man who goes to church. We become satisfied with average goodness. It is interesting to discover that, while 50 per cent. is a pass in so many of our subjects at school, medical students at Sydney University must obtain 100 per cent. in some subjects to pass. We shall agree that a doctor who was able only to get his prescription half right would be of little value or interest to most of us! Average standards are of little interest to Jesus Christ. He said: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

It is a basic doctrine of the Christian Faith that nobody can receive the power of God by his own effort. Each one of us must rest back in faith in the love and purpose of God. We do not find maturity by effort but by trust.

Too often, when troubled by our own failures, we say that we must try to do better. We should recognise that self-made goodness is impossible. Purity and strength of character are a by-product of God's power, a gift of His grace. The quality of our life is the reflection of the quality of our fellowship with the Spirit of God.

There is a splendid story told of the great preacher, Phillips Brooks. When he died, the University of Boston commissioned one of America's greatest sculptors to fashion a life-size statue of him. The artist began his task, but on finishing it he was so dissatisfied that he broke it to pieces and started again. Five times he finished his task, but still he felt he had not caught the strength of the character, or the expression of the face, of Phillips Brooks.

After his fifth attempt, the sculptor took his clay and made a statue of Jesus of Nazareth as he understood Him to be. Then, using the figure of Christ as his model, he fashioned another of Phillips Brooks. On completing it, he placed the hand of Christ on the shoulder of Phillips Brooks and turned the face of the preacher towards Jesus. At last he was satisfied with his work.

The day came when the statue with the two figures was

unveiled. After the ceremony, the University students were allowed to file past the statue. As two young Americans stood beneath the two figures, one was heard to say to the other: "Which is Phillips Brooks?"

The meaning and purpose of life are not exhausted by looking only at life in time. Full meaning can only be discovered as we look toward the horizons of eternity.

The fact is, of course, that meaning for this life comes from eternity. As Berdyaev said: "Life in time remains without meaning if it does not receive its meaning from eternity." The German thinker, Troeltsch, says: "The life beyond this world is in very deed the inspiration of the world that now is."

If, tonight, we were journeying on an ocean-going vessel, we might wander on to the bridge. There we would perhaps find an officer with his instruments, "shooting the stars." If we questioned him, he would reply: "It is only as I take my bearings from those fixed points from that other world that I can possibly reach safe harbourage here and bring this ship to its destination."

If there is no life beyond death, there is no justice, for justice demands that a longer span of time be established than three-score years and ten. If there is no justice, there is no meaning in living. If there is no life after death, there is no ultimate consummation of love. And if there is no love, life has lost its significance. If there is no life beyond, human personality is finally destroyed and life loses its dignity and worth. If there is no life beyond death, there is no ultimate achievement because all will be wiped out in the end. If there is no achievement, life also has lost its meaning. If there is no life after death, there are no eternal values and if there are no eternal values, there are no values.

Here in Australia, during the last war, a young airman became convinced that he would somewhere in its course lose his life. One day he sat in a room and wrote a letter to his parents with instructions that the letter be opened when the end came.

One day he was killed in his 'plane. Then it was that his

parents read these words: "As I sit in my room, I know that, sooner or later in this war, I shall lose my life. I am writing this letter to you so that it may be forwarded to you when the end comes. When you read this letter, please don't grieve. With the knowledge we have of Christ, death is not an ending but the beginning. It is only when we begin to realise that death is a possibility that we really appreciate life. I feel now as if I want to grasp all the beauty of the world, make the most of life, combat all thoughts of sin and ugliness, to live the cleanest life that I can. . . . Be of good heart! I go upward, ever upward. I have the green light now."

Here was one who, believing firmly in life after death, saw the relation of this belief to everyday living. The fact that he was on an eternal pilgrimage influenced each day, making him put beauty, truth and goodness into the activity of every day. He saw that life in time does indeed gain its meaning and purpose from eternity.

Life has a purpose!

CHAPTER 4

Handling Social Relationships

Each one of us must live out our lives in the presence of people. Our joys and our sorrows, our victories and defeats, usually come not in isolation but in relationship with others. Because of this, many of us suffer intensely from feelings of inadequacy in social situations and from wrong attitudes in our dealings with our fellows. A sense of inferiority or superiority, jealousy, the nursing of grudges, ideas of rejection, suspicion, feelings of persecution, all add up to grievous unhappiness over many hours in the lives of many of us.

There are two attitudes which perhaps more than others play havoc with our peace of mind. One is the sense of inferiority; the other, the mood of envy and jealousy. Faith, if it is to be sufficient, must set us at ease in social relationships and must be able to drive from our minds the ugly spirit of jealousy.

A survey taken some time ago among students in a University shows how extensive is the feeling of inferiority which exists in many lives. Of 275 young men and women questioned, 90 per cent. claimed that they believed an inferiority complex was one of their most serious personal problems.

There are, of course, many reasons for feeling inferior. We say: "I am so very unattractive"; "I find it hard to put my thoughts into words in company"; "I am intellectually slow"; "I am not clever or witty or pretty." An inferiority complex, as we call it today, is never very far from most of us.

We would begin to find the solution to our problem of inferiority if we would recognise that it often arises from some particular incident of our earlier experience. A thoughtless word by a parent, or the use of sarcasm by a school teacher years ago, or a forgotten moment of frustration in an early social situation, may be the beginning of an inferiority complex for someone today.

Some of our feelings of inferiority arise from false standards of values which we unconsciously come to accept. Society around us places such high prices upon the "old school tie," on the size of the house we live in and the car we drive, on intellectual brilliance and social success, and so we imagine these are the most important things in the world. If, for some reason, we fail to possess them, we are plunged into frustration and even despair.

Let us ask: Are these things really as valuable as we think? The truth is that the real secret of successful living does not come from any of these things at all. Indeed, many of the people who are really living successfully, happily and usefully are those upon whom the values the world rates so high sit lightly. Nothing stands out so clearly in the past as that the finest people, the men and women who have made the greatest contribution to the world have been those who have begun with few of the advantages that the world prizes so highly. The achievements of the handicapped and of those with limited means are staggering.

There is something to be said for the blunt attitude of a certain American pioneering woman who was only able to bring up a family in poverty. One of her daughters later became famous and said that she once complained to her mother about their hard lot. "See here!" said the mother. "I have given you life; that is about all I will ever be able to give. Now stop complaining and do something with it."

Some of us in our moods of inferiority may require sympathy but also we need to be challenged. Inferiority can be mere self-centredness. Our cure will come when we look away from ourselves to the world in which there is much to be done. As we recognise that we have as much to offer as other people, we may be able to lose ourselves in the service of God and of our fellows.

Jung, the famous psychologist, speaking of people's personal problems, said: "During the past thirty years I have treated hundreds of patients. Among all my patients in the second half of life, that is to say people over thirty-five years of age, there has not been one whose problem has not been, in the

last resort, that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have been able to give to their followers, and none of them has really been healed who did not regain his religious outlook."

In other words, no solution to our feelings of inferiority in the presence of our fellows will come unless we can recover, or find, a right attitude towards God. An inferiority complex is often an expression of a wrong philosophy of life and can only be solved by placing ourselves and our world in the widest of frameworks.

At the very heart of the Christian faith is the message that every individual counts in the sight of God. Jesus of Nazareth came to prove to the world that the love of God is personal and that it reaches to every individual human being. If only some of us could become conscious again of our place in God's scheme of things and find a sense of His strong hold on our lives, life could become a new experience. If we could but stand in the presence of God, seeing His trust in us, we would go out to meet our fellows in every situation in society without feelings of inferiority or fear.

If ideas of inferiority make for unhappiness in some of our lives, jealousy is the mood others of us must conquer. Certainly there is no doubt that jealousy embitters personality. It divides families; it shatters friendships; it clouds the face of God. If we are to live successfully in the presence of others, we must know how to silence the promptings of a jealous spirit.

Have you noticed how jealousy is always at its worst among people who stand closest to each other? An old Latin proverb drew attention to one of its characteristics: "The potter is envious of the potter; the blacksmith of the blacksmith." Jealousy usually does not come between people who in no sense are rivals. It rears its ugly head between those who are closest together. Thus we are jealous of the person in our own professional group or office. We come into envious conflict with some one in our social and sporting club whose achievements match our own. It strikes people who spend

time together and whose pathways frequently cross, and hence it is able to do so much injury and damage.

The conquest of jealousy comes, in part, through recognising it for what it is. It is a complex emotion. Ambition, desire, fear, even admiration, are all in it. Also it fashions its own hiding place. So often jealousy passes unrecognised. We simply pass on unjust criticisms. We question the motives of the one we dislike. We try to drag down the life and undermine the achievements of the person we envy. So often we hardly know we are doing it and, when we are aware of it, we offer our own little excuses for our attitude and meanness of spirit.

In order to drag jealousy from its hiding place, we might sometimes check the judgments we make about one another by a series of simple questions which, I think, Dr. Alexander Whyte was the first to use. He applied a three-fold standard for any statement he heard about another person, before he passed it on. His test was: "Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?" Well, are the things we think, or say, about that person in our home, office, church or club, true, necessary or kind? Are they?

Many of us go around among our fellows continually living on a basis of comparison. We are forever keeping our eye on the main chance. We are watching keenly to see that we are not outshone, that we are not eclipsed by another. But there is another way. We can live on a basis of appreciation. I do not mean that we must silence our critical faculties entirely, or be prepared to put up with anything, but I do mean bringing to every personal situation a generous, rather than a niggardly, spirit. I do mean trying to penetrate to the situation which may lie behind that which we see and hear in other lives. I do mean attempting to judge others with the same kindly judgment with which we judge ourselves.

Then there is the way of prayer. In his autobiography F. B. Meyer, one of the last generation's famous preachers, gives another method of dealing with jealousy. He emphasises that, through prayer, we can deal with jealousy. Dr. Meyer, at the close of his ministry, saw another younger man gathering the crowds which had once flocked to him. He

was honest enough to admit that jealous thoughts often arose in his mind. He said: "The only way I can conquer my feelings is to pray for him daily—which I do."

It is hard to hate, or be jealous of, one for whom we genuinely pray, seeking from God his good. Try it and see! It is the way by which, in the midst of temptation, the power of God can come in to help us overcome jealousy.

Standing behind the twin moods of inferiority and jealousy, is one common factor, self-centredness. We feel inferior because our eyes are fixed upon ourselves. We become jealous because it is our own interests which are challenged by the life and achievements of another. In each case, we cannot get beyond our own shadow. In each situation, life has become out of focus, our vision has become blurred and distorted. It is our own image which shuts out the rest of the universe.

There was once a woman whose life became hopelessly out of focus. Small things dominated; trifles appeared to possess a power out of all proportion to their worth. Her life became fretful, distorted, cast down. She chose to go to her doctor and there revealed the tensions of her being. He had a simple suggestion to make. "Take a sea voyage, a long sea voyage." She was able to accept his advice and soon her tired eyes were looking out over the vast distances of the rolling ocean and at night she rediscovered the quiet presence of the eternal stars. Slowly, peace of mind returned. In the larger world she found serenity and strength.

Faith is able to set us in a vaster context. It brings before us the majesty and the wonder of the living God. It places the centre of all things in Him, not in ourselves. It reveals to us the matchless love of God which, in Jesus Christ, picks us all up into His meaning and purpose. In His wider world are quietness and confidence. In glimpsing His Kingdom and His promises, our own sense of inferiority seems to matter less. Then, because it drops from view, it is in part overcome. In God's world jealousy stands revealed as the poor and mean thing that it is. Faith is enough in the handling of our social relationships.

CHAPTER 5

The Answer to Loneliness

She came one evening out of the loneliness of a great city to my door. Years before, her husband had vanished, leaving to her care four little children. She had courageously begun to toil long and unremittingly in order to provide for them. Now the last of them, no longer needing her, had moved from her side. Now, almost suddenly, she had discovered her aloneness and was looking down the empty years ahead. What could she do? This was her question and her cry. She suddenly knew that she had become one of the vast company of the lonely.

Loneliness! I have come to the conclusion that loneliness is one of the world's greatest modern problems. The growth of great cities has created masses of people who live without community and without fellowship. The turbulent mid-years of this century have sent millions of refugees streaming across national boundaries. Under the pressures of war and economic distress, millions have changed their places of residence. For these and other reasons every community is filled with lonely people.

The truth is, of course, that everyone of us was made for fellowship. Man, as Aristotle observed long ago, is a social animal. The judgment of the Genesis account has by no means been out-grown—"It is not good for man to be alone." Every one of us knows, by experience, that when, for one cause or another, we become separated from our fellows, we cease to see life steadily and whole. We are in for trouble if we cannot say that little phrase: "I belong."

The teaching of Jesus is very clear on the significance of fellowship. In the fifteenth chapter of Luke there are three parables: one of the lost sheep, another of the lost coin, and another of the lost, or prodigal, son. It is clear that, for Jesus, "to be lost" meant to be separated away from a rightful relationship. The sheep wandered from the flock, the coin was separated from a chaplet of ten, and the prodigal

son was far from the family circle. In each case, wholeness of life was restored when that which was separated returned to its true place. To be "saved," to use a very common word, was for the sheep to be placed amid the flock in the fold; for the coin, it meant being one of the ten on the chaplet again; and for the son, to be back within the fellowship of the home.

Can the Christian Faith help us to deal with loneliness? Of course it can. Actually, however, if we think into it, there are three kinds of loneliness. There is what we may call the loneliness of loyalty, the separation that comes when we are true to an ideal, true to our inner, better selves. There is a loneliness of circumstances when, through isolation, we become separated from our fellows. Then there is the loneliness of sin, the sin which drives us away from our fellows and from our God.

The Rev. F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, one of the most famous of British preachers in the nineteenth century, was a lonely man. Early in his brief ministry, he was popular but being a man ahead of his day, his outspoken opinions soon aroused resentment. One day he began to realise the alienation that was beginning to overtake him. He wrote: "I shall be alone as my Master was. I am hated by some who liked me once, not for what I do but for what I think. I am not afraid to be alone, but . . . there is some sharpness in the thought."

There is a loneliness of loyalty. It is the loneliness that can come through obedience to some vision or some truth that has seized a man's mind. It is a bitter form of loneliness because, sometimes, it is inescapable. Worst of all, sometimes, it separates us from those we know and love.

One of the hardest things in the world to bear is the puzzled, troubled look on the faces of those we respect when we take a stand that is not understood. The opposition of those who have little link with us is easy to bear compared with the silent questionings of those who mean everything to us. It is the loneliness which Jesus knew when, one day, His own family came and sought Him, saying: "He is beside himself."

The peril of the loneliness of loyalty is self-pity. It is so easy to see only the hardness of the way and to forget that it is out of such conflict and its inevitable loneliness that new life always comes. After all, it was from the loneliness of Moses away on Mount Horeb and the even greater loneliness of spirit in his separation from his people that the Ten Commandments came. From Jeremiah, that lonely figure of the Old Testament, came the greatness of his insight and the abiding inspiration of his life. And, of course, out of the loneliness of Jesus, the One who "trod the wine-press alone," has come our salvation. Loneliness seems to be the price that must be paid to lift mankind to a new level of insight and power.

Joan of Arc had the answer. Her loneliness became not her weakness, but her strength. It stimulated her to greater faith and courage. Her words, as imagined by George Bernard Shaw, are worth quoting: "Yes, I am alone; I have always been alone. Do you think you can frighten me by telling me that I am alone? France is alone, and God is alone; and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength. Well, my loneliness shall be my strength, too. It is better to be alone with God. In His strength I will dare and dare and dare—until I die."

Another kind of loneliness, and the one with which we are all so familiar, is the loneliness of circumstances. It is the loneliness of geographic isolation, of sorrow, of bereavement, of old age, of being far from home, perhaps in a foreign land.

I shall not forget the utter feeling of desolation which came over me once in the American city of Detroit. Owing to transport difficulties, there were six hours to spend in that great city. With nothing to do and no one to see, the hours dragged miserably. I remember going to the pictures but leaving half-way through; of being strangely grateful for a pleasant smile from someone who served me from behind a counter; of the sense of isolation amid the thousands at a baseball game to which I went to pass the time. I can remember walking miles along dreary paved streets, with an

intense longing for home that was akin to physical pain. It was the loneliness of circumstances.

Ian MacLaren tells of a Highland girl named Flora who felt this way once in London. She said: "It is weary to be in London. I will be looking at the crowd that is always passing and see not one kind face. When I looked in at the lighted windows, the people were all sitting around the table, but there was no place for me. Millions, millions of people and not one sore heart if I died that night."

The world today is filled with people just like this. There is the loneliness of youth, in which young people battle with their tempestuous problems, suffering often alone, hardly daring to mention their difficulties to others. There is the loneliness of age, of the years when companions have passed on and there are, perhaps, few now who know and remember. There is the loneliness of suburbia. In small rooms and flats many women find life dragging on their hands; their children and husbands are away during the hours of the day and there are long periods to be faced alone.

Some time ago a London medical officer, Dr. J. E. Elan, made a statement which received world-wide publicity. When commenting on the death of a London housewife who had committed suicide, he said: "She is but one of the thousands of London women who suffer from suburban neurosis. The out-patient departments of all the London hospitals are full of them. The lonely lives of many suburban housewives constitute grave medical and social problems."

One of the answers to the loneliness of circumstances is to set out to offer friendship to others. The trouble with loneliness is that it sets up a vicious circle. It makes us tense, embarrassed and unattractive, and thus it repels others. This, in turn, means more isolation and more loneliness. Loneliness turns us in upon ourselves when our great need is to lose ourselves in offering friendship to others.

The only way to find friendship is to offer friendship. I know it may sound hard to say it but, if you are lonely, perhaps it is time you were challenged to think less of your own aloneness and more of the needs of those around you. Probably, right within reach of your own life, there is some-

body who is just as lonely as you are. An approach from you in an effort to break through to that other life would solve the loneliness of two people, that other person's and your own. Let me say tenderly, as Emerson once did: "The only way to have a friend is to be a friend."

My Faith has the answer to this kind of loneliness in the fact of the Christian Church. Jesus set His Church amid the people to be a centre within reach of all. He intended it to be a community of people, rich and warm in fellowship. It was meant to be small enough so that all who came to it might, in its various congregations, feel that each one counted.

No one will ever know what the world has lost by the decline of the church-going habit in many communities. It is not as though men and women have found elsewhere a real substitute for the Christian Church. They have often gone out into emptiness and loneliness.

Yes, the Christian Church was given by God through Jesus Christ as part of the answer to the loneliness of circumstances.

There is also offered to everyone of us the companionship of God. Jesus Himself found this to be true amid His loneliness. He said: "I am not alone because the Father is with Me." And that same God stands near to every one of us. John G. Paton, the famous missionary to the New Hebrides, discovered this. Soon after he arrived at his mission post, his young wife and child both died and he himself was forced to bury them near the beach. As he finished filling in that little grave, he said: "I was never altogether forsaken. The merciful Lord sustained me. But for Jesus and the fellowship he vouchsafed me there, I must have gone mad and died beside that lonely grave."

Do you remember the theme of Samuel Coleridge's poem, "The Ancient Mariner"? A sailor killed an albatross, an act which, to the superstitious men of the sea, involved serious consequences. From that act came loneliness, the loneliness of sin. Presently the Mariner said:

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea,
So lonely 'twas, that even God,
Scarce seemed there to be."

There is no doubt whatever that one of the most grievous consequences of sin is that it separates and isolates. When we do evil to our fellows, we alienate them from us. When we sin in our mind and heart, we have a sense of desolation of soul. As Adam and Eve found, long, long ago, sin drives us away from the presence of God. Sin makes us feel that we are not sons of God but lonely orphans in a condemning world.

One of the saddest examples of the loneliness of sin comes from the life of the poet and hymn-writer, William Cowper. At one stage of his life, this rather morose and somewhat unbalanced man attempted to commit suicide. He was rescued in time by a friend. Soon after that, he had a dream. In this dream he saw himself leaving his home at the sound of church bells, hurrying towards a great cathedral. Just as he was moving up the steps to enter it, however, the great doors slammed closed. He took it as a warning to him that the gates of heaven had closed against him, because of his attempts to take his own life. From then until his dying day, he thought of himself as beyond the pale.

Of course, he was wrong. The great good news of the Christian Faith is that sin does not really make us orphans for, whatever happens, we remain the children of God. Surely this is the great message of the parable of the prodigal son. The son thought that his sin had meant permanent isolation and loneliness. But when, at last, he set off back toward his father's home, he was received with great gladness and thankfulness. If you look into the story of his welcome home, you will find that he was greeted with all the symbols of fellowship. There was the kiss of welcome; the fatted calf was killed to represent the light and joy of a banqueting table; a ring of sonship was placed again on his finger; and shoes were put on his feet for dancing. There was merriment and fellowship and thanksgiving in that home. There was an answer to the loneliness of his sin. It was the answer of a father's forgiveness and a father's love.

You see, we can say in all our loneliness: "My Faith is enough!"

CHAPTER 6

The Fear of Failure

Lurking deep within the minds of many of us today is a haunting fear of failure. If we are young, with our lives still before us and our careers still to carve, there are many moments when we wonder whether we can possibly succeed. There rises before us the haunting spectre of failure. If we are further on the way and can already point to some small achievements in our lives, we are conscious of the heights ahead of us and we wonder whether, in spite of all that has happened, we might yet miss the best. If someone has succeeded in his life and achieved some eminence among his fellows, there is little sense of security for always the possibility of bitter failure is before him, into which at any time he knows he may fall. There are few of us who escape, at some time in our lives, the fear of failure.

In a world which makes so-called success a supreme ambition, a wide-spread fear of failure is inevitable. After all, the "Log Cabin to White House" mentality is very much a part of our mental climate. From early childhood, our ambitions are fed by success stories and failure is presented

as a grievous defeat. In so many of our homes little children are very early taught by ambitious parents that success is a virtue, failure a sin. In our competitive school system frequent examinations keep the spot-light on getting ahead of others and on the ignominy of failure. The social and economic order under which we all live gives its greatest rewards to those who are able to claim what the world calls success. From the beginning to the end, therefore, the pressure is on and many of us, as a result, live out our lives under the perpetual threat of failure.

However, there are really three kinds of failure. There is a failure which we should rightly fear; there is a failure which should have no place in our thinking because it is founded on false and distorted values: there is a failure to be coveted, a failure that is glorious.

There is a fear of one kind of failure which must ever live in our minds, else we are in deadly peril. It is the fear of moral failure. If the day ever comes when we are no longer afraid of betraying our ideals, of tarnishing our honour, or of losing the ceaseless battle between right and wrong which ever goes on in all hearts, we have become most vulnerable. A fear of moral collapse is one safeguard against it. As the Bible puts it, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

One night in December, 1879, a passenger train left Edinburgh, Scotland, for the city of Dundee. It was a wild night with a howling gale. At last the train reached a bridge which had recently been built. Slowly it moved out over the gorge. Suddenly, there was a dread sound of crunching timbers as the central part of the bridge gave way. The whole train, with its human freight, plunged to death. Every passenger died that night. Later, an enquiry was held into the tragedy and the official finding was given that the bridge collapsed "because of a sudden pressure of the wind from an unexpected quarter."

It was a sudden thrust of temptation from an unexpected quarter which, you remember, overthrew the apostle Peter on the eve of the Crucifixion.

Everyone of us, as one of the psalms puts it, "carries his soul in his hand." Always we stand amid the perils of moral failure. No victory in the past, no steady strengthening of character, ever makes us completely safe. It is very easy for pride to go before a fall. Peter was not the first, nor the last, who fell because of a certain over-confidence. We should all, then, be very grateful if there remains strong within our hearts a fear of moral failure.

Living for the right is a very risky business. We may collapse, some by a sudden overthrow, others by the gradual loss of idealism and the wasting of inner strength. There is, to quote the Psalms again, "a wastage that comes at noonday." As we go on in our lives, we find that evil is far stronger and more difficult to uproot than we thought. Perhaps money and position come to us and both begin to matter more than they did once. Our minds begin to work more for the conservation of our own interests and less upon the fulfilment of our ideals. It all causes a subtle change in our moral convictions and sometimes, unsuspectingly, we come to lose something of the faith that was ours when we first set out.

In some ways the slow, persistent pressure of life around us is more dangerous to our moral and spiritual welfare than the sudden blow of circumstance. As someone has said, "It is not by accident that man has conquered the Plague more easily than tuberculosis. The first comes in terrifying waves of death and gives a shock to mankind; the other creeps on slowly. The first induces terror; the other, gradual indifference. The result is that men fight the first with the whole of their energy, whilst they try to stop T.B. with feeble methods. Men conquered the Plague, but tuberculosis has often conquered them."

It is only the recognition of danger, a strong fear of moral failure, which will give us protection!

But who can speak of moral failure without thinking of those of us who have already fallen? If there is anything that is true about the life of Jesus, it was His sympathy for those who had failed. None were denied His compassion.

In Massachusetts on Thanksgiving Day the Governor of the State goes to the gaol with a free pardon for one of the prisoners. There is great anticipation throughout the prison as each man wonders whether he is to be freed. At last the Governor stands up before the assembled men to announce the name of the one chosen.

They tell the story of a prisoner who had been in the prison for nearly twenty years. As was the custom, he lined up with the rest, but he showed little interest. His name had, of course, never been mentioned. At last the name was read and the one chosen was commanded to step forward. This prisoner made no move. "It's you," said one of the prison warders, going to him. "Me?" replied the man. "Me? Me? It can't be me! It must be someone else with the same name." When, at last, the wonderful truth dawned on him, he broke down and sobbed like a child.

"Depths of mercy, can there be
Mercy still left for me?"

Faith is enough. If you have failed and fallen, there is One who stands saying quietly that mercy still is reserved for you. Failures in the sight of Jesus of Nazareth are never final!

There is a fear of failure which is false. It is built on a wrong sense of values. It comes from a distorted list of priorities. It is a fear which rises from exaggerating the importance of things which, in the last analysis, are not worth worrying about.

Are you willing to carry out a simple exercise? Take a pencil and write down a list of all the things about which you have worried over the last week. What have you written —the making or losing of money? promotion in your office or profession? whether you are a social success or not? Now, having written the list, look at each item, one by one. Do you really think that these things are as important and valuable as you, perhaps, have imagined?

Some time ago a poll was taken in Paris to try to find out the things people regarded as the most valuable in life.

At the top of the list was a comfortable existence. Then followed freedom from fear of war, a happy family life, freedom of opinion and free choice of work. Religious liberty was ranked second last, with the esteem of fellowmen seventh on the list.

Reflected in this list of priorities is the sense of values which governs so much of our thinking. All too often we place a comfortable existence at the top of our desires and hence we are vulnerable to fear, the fear of failure.

No one can underestimate, of course, the importance of possessions, of position in relation to our fellows and of the state of our bodies. Yet, too often, a quite unworthy place is given to each of these concerns in our thinking and our lives. The point is, of course, that, if our main hope is in these things, we can so easily be cast down. Some of us really need to hear the quiet word of Jesus: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but fear rather him which is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell."

There is a revealing incident in the autobiography of Jack Lawson, the English Labour leader. He describes how, during one summer, success came to him. He was being invited to speak all over the country. Important positions were offered to him. Then came the winter and with it long evenings during which he was able to spend time quietly in his own home.

One night he sat with his two children on his knees looking out over the mining village in which he lived. Then it was that, amid the simple pleasures of his home, he asked himself what life was about and what he should really be seeking. He came to the conclusion that his real purpose should be to try to build a world in which his own children and other people's children could feel secure and be able to grow to fulness of life. He said simply: "I realised then that I needed time to total up the worth of it all, to take the soundings, to read the compass, to see if the ship of my dreams was sailing true to direction."

Do you remember the ideals with which you first set out? Are you sailing true to direction? To ask—and answer—such

questions as these might drive from our hearts the fear of failure which can so easily be built on false assumptions. It could show us that some of our fears are but the reflection of false values. It could set us free.

There is one other type of failure at which we must look. It is the failure that is far better than what the world calls success. It is the failure to be coveted, a failure that is glorious.

History is filled with stories of men and women who were accounted failures at the time of their living but who, with the passing of the years, have become the noblest figures of the human race. Jeremiah failed in the eyes of his people, dying in the end an exile in an alien land amid the scorn of so many of his compatriots. But today we know that he was the most Christ-like figure in the Old Testament. John the Baptist ended his life in defeat, but as Jesus said, "There was none greater born of woman." Joan of Arc failed, but she became immortal and one of the mightiest forces in the imagination of mankind. President Wilson, with his dream of the League of Nations, was accounted a failure, yet he was a glorious failure, as history will in the end surely show.

I wonder, however, whether there is any greater story of seeming failure that was truly glorious, than the story of Captain Scott's journey to, and from, the South Pole. The journey was a failure. Admittedly, Scott and his party reached the South Pole, but another had been there before them. On their return journey they lost all they had, even their lives. But who thinks of failure when we think of those men battling against insuperable odds, amid the wastes of the Antarctic region? In imagination, millions have stood in that last tent and have seen the picture conjured up by Captain Scott's final letter. "It would do your heart good to be in our tent, to hear our songs and the cheery conversation. We have decided to die naturally in the track. Had we lived, I should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance and courage of my companions, which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale. . . ."

"Speak History! Who are life's heroes?
Unrol your long annals and say
Are they those whom the world accounts heroes?
Who win the success of a day?

"The martyrs or Nero? the Spartans
Who fell at Thermopylae's tryst?
Or the Persians and Xerxes; his judges.
Or Socrates; Pilate or Christ?"

To stand by the right, to earn the proud title of peacemaker, to be loyal to high moral and ethical principles, come what may, to live in service for our fellows, to be called a friend of God, to carry our shield to the end without stain upon it —these are better than success or failure. To make these our life's goals is to drive for ever from our hearts any unworthy fear of failure.

CHAPTER 7

The Healing Power of Forgiveness

There came to see me one day a young woman about thirty years of age. She was obviously tense and unhappy. It was soon apparent she was near to a serious nervous breakdown. Gradually, she unfolded her story. As she talked, it became clear that the crucial happening in her life had been an incident which had taken place when she was fourteen years old. At that time she had committed what she felt to be a bad sin. So serious was it in her own eyes that she had not been able to gain forgiveness. Later, she wanted to be a school teacher, but she felt that she was not clean enough to touch the lives of little children. An opportunity of marriage came, but she turned away from it for the same reason. Now, here she was, years later, almost broken in personality, and all because she had not been able to find the healing power of forgiveness.

There is no doubt that moral failure, sin, when it remains unforgiven, possesses tremendous power to hurt and to divide human personality. However, forgiveness, when we know it has become ours, releases gentle, healing streams into our lives. And so, because along our course we all fall into sin, we must find forgiveness, if life is to be wholesome and strong. Our Faith must bring to us the certainty of forgiveness, if it is to be enough to meet our need.

The healing power of forgiveness can be set flowing only as we believe that God is ready and willing to forgive. It all begins with the conviction that Jesus Christ brings the good news that God's forgiveness is available.

How can we be sure that God speaks the lovely words: "I forgive thee"? The world of nature does not prove it. We may stand on a beach in the moonlight, watching the rolling waves and marvelling at the beauty of the night sky, and become conscious of God as Creator. In the strange twistings of history we can discern the judgments of God, for history

is the story of the judgment of God. From the operations of conscience we may learn that God is holy and righteous. But at none of these points do we become sure of the forgiveness and the mercy of God.

It is Jesus Christ who declares, proves, and underlines the forgiveness of God. During His life we hear Him say again and again: "Thy sins are forgiven. Go, sin no more!" Above all, on the Cross where He died, the word is on His lips: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Over all the centuries since, men and women have come near to Christ and especially to His Cross and have found peace. Instinctively, they have followed the river upstream as it were, finding it rising from the heart of God.

The centre of the problem of evil is how sin can be forgiven without suggesting it is of little importance. It is a real difficulty in handling children. Parents are disturbed by their child's unworthy action. There is no desire to pass over it lightly lest it become part of the child's outlook and habits. To punish is unpleasant. How does a parent forgive without giving the impression that right and wrong are much the same, without seeming to wink at evil?

God grapples with this issue through the life, and particularly in the death, of Jesus Christ. In the cross of Jesus God forgives, yet preserves the seriousness of sin. Sin, which is always serious and costly, is there matched by a love which, by the price paid in suffering and sacrifice, upholds holiness while yet offering forgiveness.

Dr. Stanley Jones tells the story of a husband and wife who were sent to India. While they were there, long separations became necessary, the husband having to spend long periods away from home. Once, in Calcutta, lonely and tempted, he fell. He was unfaithful to his wife, who continued to love him dearly. On his next visit to Calcutta the same thing happened but then, becoming ashamed, he cut it out of his life. However, the memory of his wrongdoing remained. It haunted him. It spoilt fellowship with his wife. At last, he felt that he must tell her. Choosing his moment, he unfolded the miserable story. She was

shocked beyond measure at the betrayal of their love. But then she struggled through the crisis and offered him forgiveness. She was ready to start again and rebuild their trust and unity. Afterwards, telling of that moment of confession, the penitent husband said: "In that moment, I saw the meaning of the Cross of Jesus. I saw love crucified by sin."

God, through Jesus Christ, declares that forgiveness is available. Neither easily nor cheaply does it come to us. Yet, if we are ready quietly to pause beneath the Cross on which Jesus died, the healing word can come to us: "Thy sins are forgiven. Go, sin no more!"

There are, however, definite conditions which must be fulfilled, if the healing power of forgiveness is to be received by us. Nothing ever happens automatically in the spiritual world. From our side must come the response which makes the receiving of God's great gift possible.

By repentance, forgiveness comes to us. Self-satisfaction, pride, a refusal to admit that we have done wrong makes it impossible for God to forgive. Yet what is repentance? It is far more than merely being sorry for our sin. It is possible to regret a past happening without being repentant. Repentance is more than sorrow or remorse. It is a sincere desire, a resolute determination, to turn from that which we have been doing.

Repentance is essential for new beginnings. It is as necessary for nations as for individuals. National repentance for our share in the wars of this century and for the tragic divisions and bitterness which separate East from West would carry us nearer peace. National pride and self-righteousness are some of the most serious causes of war. The spirit of self-judgment and self-analysis rarely appears in the relationships of States. An attitude of true penitence and forgiveness, infused into international relations, could transform the world, releasing new, creative forces into the relationships of peoples.

There is another condition for receiving the forgiveness of God. It is that we, in turn, must forgive those who have injured us. God's forgiveness is dependent on our forgive-

ness. The only phrase in the Lord's Prayer which has a qualifying clause relates to forgiveness. "Forgive us our sins as we forgive them that have sinned against us." As we forgive each other, so we can expect the forgiveness of God.

How hard it is to forgive! As a character in a recent novel says: "I forgave . . . but I kept him at arm's length." Another quaint comment points to the difficulty of full and complete forgiveness: "Nobody forgets where he buries the hatchet." Yet, until we sit down and write a letter to someone from whom we are separated, until we cease to nurse a grudge and a bitterness, we cannot receive the forgiveness of God.

When we have fulfilled these conditions, then we can claim Christ's forgiveness. We can say: "Forgiveness is for all." So many seem to worry about what has been called "the unpardonable sin." There is actually no such thing as an unpardonable sin. The Bible speaks of an unpardonable attitude. If we will not come in penitence, if we will not forgive our enemy, then God cannot forgive us. But there is no specific sin, sexual or otherwise, which puts us beyond the range of God's forgiveness. Whosoever will may come. Forgiveness is for all. Jesus Christ came not only to forgive Mary and Zacchaeus and Peter; He came to forgive you and me. "Thy sins are forgiven. Go, sin no more!"

What are the consequences which flow from the forgiveness of God? As a result of receiving the healing power of forgiveness, new factors enter our lives and our world.

Forgiveness brings a new unity and harmony to personality. As one of the Christian hymns puts it, "He gives the labouring conscience peace." Through forgiveness comes peace of heart, the only peace there is.

Many of us work out our own technique for dealing with the moral failures of our lives. In the main, we trust to time to heal. We try to forget our moral lapse, our unworthy thought, or word, or act, by passing on to the next incident in our life. For a few days our failure worries us. Then, because it has dropped out of mind, we imagine that it has been dealt with. But we cannot bury a live sin. Unless

forgiveness is received, the memory of a sin committed can fall into our sub-conscious mind, there to fester and disrupt, making peace of mind impossible.

Time does not cancel out sin. Only the love and power of Christ can do that. Until some of us bring our unforgiven sins to the surface of our minds, look at them again in the presence of Jesus Christ, and receive His forgiveness, we cannot know inner peace. Our need is to bring these past failures to mind and then, after forgiveness, allow them to fall away from our minds because God has settled with them. Then they can do no further damage to us.

From the forgiveness comes new power. Unpardoned sin is an obstruction which blocks the flowing in of God's grace. In the New Testament there is a story of a paralysed man who was brought to Jesus on a bed by his friends. At once, Jesus said: "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." Then, following forgiveness, Jesus said: "Rise up and walk." And the paralytic did. New power flows in when forgiveness removes the blockage caused by sin.

There is one other consequence which comes with forgiveness. It is a sense of gratitude, an attitude of obligation. It was G. K. Chesterton who pointed to the strange paradox that he who knows that he is hopelessly, irretrievably, in debt to someone is the one who so often seeks to pay that debt. He knows it is impossible, but something impels him to try. To quote Chesterton's own words, "He who knows he can never repay his debt most passionately seeks to do it."

A Christian is someone who knows that he is overwhelmingly in debt to Jesus Christ. Because of His forgiveness there is gratitude, there is gladly accepted obligation on the part of the one forgiven. It was gratitude for what Christ had done which launched the early Christian Church into the world. It is gratitude that remains the true motive for Christian living and Christian service. Following forgiveness comes the challenge, no, the desire, to serve, to live and work for the Christ who has done so much for each one of us.

John Charles Thomas, the American soloist, sang at the

San Francisco General Conference of the Methodist Church. After singing two ballads for which he is famous, he decided to sing, as an encore, a simple hymn, the hymn which, he said, his mother had loved best. Presently, a strange hush fell on the vast audience as it heard the words of that song:

"Tell me the story of Jesus, 6
Write on my heart every word,
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard."

My Faith is enough. Write on my heart the words: "Thy sins are forgiven. Go, sin no more!"

CHAPTER 8

You Can Go Free

In the first century people believed in the existence of evil powers—demons, devils, call them what you like—which preyed upon human welfare and happiness. The apostle Paul once called them, "principalities and powers." It was a common belief then that there were seven layers of air between earth and heaven and in each of these lived these evil forces which could descend to earth, taking into bondage the lives and affairs of men and women. Where, for example, there was insanity, or epilepsy, or many forms of sickness, there was evidence of the presence and tyranny of evil spirits. These misfortunes and tragedies for men, it was said, were caused by demons. Hence, people walked in terror of the "powers of the air" and suffered, because of this fear, from what Professor Ramsay has called "a failure of nerve." They thus looked yearningly for a deliverer, for someone who would be strong enough to strike off the evil power that could grip men and then give them freedom.

Into this world stepped Jesus of Nazareth. Inevitably, as His fame spread, His life was seen to be a coming to grips

with the evil forces, the "principalities and powers," which inhabited the universe. As He preached and worked, He showed that He was able to heal sickness, to give the epileptic peace, to quieten the insane. All this was more startling to the people of that first century of the Christian era than it is even to us. It meant that a Champion had stepped on to the scene, that One was in their midst who was proving that His power was greater than the powers of darkness. Jesus Himself uttered many words which encouraged this interpretation of Himself. "If I, by the finger of God, cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you." The tremendous significance of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus is that, in them, Jesus and the evil forces which sought His destruction because He had challenged their authority came into final, mortal combat. And when it was over, Christ was victorious. The demons were vanquished. The victory remained with Christ.

Now let us turn from this first century. We live in a very different setting. We no longer believe in devils, or demon-possession. For us, sickness, epilepsy and insanity have very different causes than the activity of demons. Our world-view does not include a belief in "principalities and powers." Evil, if we call it by that name, exists in men's minds and hearts. It is subjective and personal. It lacks external reality.

At least, this is the kind of outlook we had until somewhat recently. Now we are not quite so sure. We have become conscious of mighty forces at work in our world which seem to pick up individual men and women and hold them in a dread bondage. We have seen Nazism take charge of seemingly sane and wholesome men and women and turn them to the ways of unbelievable cruelty. That is but one example of evil possession in our time. There are many others. The swollen power of the State, certain brands of militarism, dark forces like Mau Mau terrorism, aspects of Communism, McCarthyism, evil traffics like the liquor trade, all seem capable of placing men in bondage, of holding mankind to ransom.

Thinking of these things, many of us today realise we stand nearer the first century than we knew. Evil forces are mighty, persistent, entrenched. They seem able to take hold of men and groups, even nations, and make them do their bidding. And so, like the people of that first century, we cry out for deliverance.

Into our world, no less than into far-off Nazareth or Jerusalem, steps Jesus Christ. He comes still as our Champion, as our Deliverer, as our Saviour. He wrestles still with "principalities and powers." And still He wins His victory.

But how does the victory of Christ over evil long ago help us today? If He can set men free, how is it done? How can I go free?

First of all, we must believe that Christ is more powerful than evil. He has gained, once and for all, the victory over the powers of darkness. If only rationally and sanely we could come to this conviction, all would be altered.

Oscar Cullmann, in his book *Christ and Time*, uses a valuable illustration to explain how Christ has won a decisive victory against the powers of evil, even though it may appear that evil still possesses tremendous strength. He uses the idea that a war is won before its final battle, in some vital engagement during its progress which virtually determines the issue. Hence, we may say, the last war was really won at Stalingrad or on the beaches of Normandy. Victory to the Allies in those decisive battles made the final defeat of Germany inevitable. From then on the issue was really decided. It was only a matter of time for it to appear.

Christ, in the midst of time, defeated the powers of evil on the cross outside Jerusalem's walls. But evil still possesses tremendous strength. Actually, however, we struggle against a defeated foe. Christ's victory has been won, but that victory has not fully been consummated. As Paul puts it, "He must reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet." But, you see, Christ is reigning in power—now.

There are many incidents where we glimpse the victory of Christ, as it were, through His triumph in some given and immediate situation.

One of the notable books published during 1953 was entitled *The Conquest of Devil's Island*, by Charles Pean. It tells the amazing story of the closing of the penal settlement in French Guiana known as "Devil's Island."

It was in 1852 that the first convicts arrived at French Guiana. From that date, it became "an ante-room to death." It was truly called "a hell on earth." Men went to it, but they rarely returned from it. Defying all attempts to elevate its life, it remained a place of terror and corruption until 1928. In that year the leader of the Salvation Army in France sent a young lieutenant, Charles Pean, to grapple with its sin and despair. With patience, intelligence, and faith, he set about his task. After carefully surveying the problem, he began his work with a two-fold purpose: to alleviate the lot of the men there and to work for the ultimate abolition of the settlement. With a message of personal redemption and social salvation, Charles Pean and his helpers toiled on against heart-breaking difficulties until, in 1952, he saw the last of the convicts set out for France. As he saw them go, Pean said simply: "Devil's Island has lasted a century. Now it is nothing but a story." But what a story! What a story of the power of Christ!

Running through the New Testament, and especially through the letters of Paul, is a cry which seems often to have been thrown in the teeth of those forces which tried to hold the early Christians in slavery: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead."

Nevertheless, the victory of Christ does not become ours in any automatic way. By our own faith, it must be brought within our own minds and hearts. Christ's conquest has happened, but it can only happen in us as we make it our own by calling upon the victorious Christ for aid.

The great barrier which keeps the victory of Christ external to us is pride—pride in ourselves. This was brought home to me vividly recently when I was trying to help a man who was wrestling in an effort to escape from a realised bondage to alcohol. His need was narrowed down to the point where he faced the simple Christian claim that, until he would despair of his own strength and turn to Christ to save him,

little could be done for him. But he resisted this claim. He drew a line with his finger across the table. "I know I must cross that line and say that I am beaten and that I cannot help myself. But my self-esteem, my pride, would never allow me to take that step. I will never admit that I cannot help myself. I will never confess that I am a slave to something I cannot myself throw off."

There it was, with complete frankness. Most of us do not put it so clearly, even to ourselves. But we struggle on, cherishing the illusion that we are really master of ourselves, and it only requires a little more effort for a little longer and we shall win our own victory and freedom.

There is no hope for us until we break from this self-trust. It is a Saviour we need. Yet even Christ cannot save us until we ask Him to come to our aid. As, believing in His victory, we ask humbly that His conquering power may come upon us, we shall go free. There is no other way. Christ's external victory must become ours by personal penitence and faith.

Let me refer to one bondage about which we rarely speak. Abnormal sex behaviour is increasing rapidly in Australia. Christian ministers tell of a sharp increase in the number of people coming to them with grievous problems of this kind. Many Australians are silently suffering torment because they are in bondage to some form of personal impurity.

Sex abnormality is evidence of a moral breakdown and a decadence in society. It reveals the urgent need for a renewal of the community which only a religious revival can finally produce. The strains and tensions of a revolutionary period in world affairs partly explains the breakdown. The unworthy exploitation of sex by magazines and films is also stimulating the evil. Two world wars and peace-time military conscription, by herding men in unnatural isolation, have greatly accentuated the situation.

Jesus Christ offers deliverance from the helplessness and shame of bondage to personal impurity of imagination and habit. Several steps can be taken which can lead to deliverance.

Hold up the purity and strength of Christ daily. Remember that many are fighting the same lonely battle. Live one day

at a time. Seek power by prayer for one day only, renewing vows made each twenty-four hours. Seek the help of a Christian minister. Sharing such problems helps greatly. Spend more time with people. Enter into the living fellowship of the Christian Church. Remember that the power of Jesus Christ is greater than the power of evil.

Jesus Christ came to the world to set men and women free from every kind of inner personal slavery. The battle against personal impurity of thought and action is long and it is often filled with disappointment, but it can be won.

How do we appropriate the victory of Christ? By entering into the life of the Christian Church. How do we live a life of freedom? By constantly receiving, through the Church, strength to maintain freedom.

I remember standing one evening, just at dusk, amid the mouldering ruins of the Colosseum in Rome. There, at the very point where the early Christians were brought from the dungeons below to face death in the arena, is a cross. I can recall wondering how those Christians gained the strength to pit their Faith against the might of the Roman Empire. On the next day I went out of the city to the catacombs—to those sixteen miles of tunnels in which the same early Christians held their worship. I saw the mounds of earth where the tunnels widened and which were used as primitive altars. Then it was that I saw the link between the catacombs and the arena. Each individual who went to die, did not go alone. He went in the power of the Christian fellowship.

Evil is organised. Its power is in its solidarity. If we are to stand opposed to it, we, too, must stand together. Isolated individuals are usually no match for corporate, co-ordinated wickedness. It is a community of people, the Church, which, under God, is meant to overcome "principalities and powers."

I admit that the Christian Church is today living far below its maximum capacity. Yet, through it, evil forces could be defeated. Perhaps, if we believed enough, sickness and insanity could be overcome. The "principalities and powers," the forces that make for war and social disharmony, could

be vanquished. But the Church stands as part of the answer; without it, there can be no victory that overcomes the world.

The Churches in action, praying and working together, can accomplish the impossible. Let me give an example of how, through the Church, men go free. It comes from the book already mentioned, *The Conquest of Devil's Island.*

In the centre established for the convicts by the Salvation Army on Devil's Island, the wife of one of the Salvation Army officers was alone with a man named Lacour. Sleeping in a pram in the same room was the officer's baby girl. A messenger arrived from the officer asking his wife to come urgently to another part of the settlement. For a moment she glanced at her sleeping child and hesitated. She knew that the convict, Lacour, was there because in France he had cruelly murdered his own baby. Then she said quietly: "I leave the baby in your care."

Some little time later she returned. Lacour was on his knees beside the pram, gazing intently into the face of the sleeping child. His face was bathed in tears. "What a wretch I am," he was sobbing. Through that simple incident, he had realised his own sin. Through the trust of one who had come in the name of the Christ, cleansing, saving waters flooded into his heart. From that hour, he was a new man.

How shall we appropriate the victory of Christ? By becoming part of the fellowship, the community of the Church. By living in it, we shall continue to be free . . . and we can set about mediating freedom to others.

CHAPTER 9

When Sorrow Comes

"One day there came a messenger . . ." And so the news was brought to Job in the Bible of the tragic change of fortune which had overtaken his life. Up till this point, Job had known prosperity and happiness. He had his family of ten children. He had large possessions, oxen, asses, camels. His authority was recognised over a large area of country. He had many servants to do his bidding. In spite of all his prosperity, however, he remained a humble, grateful and wise man. Up to this moment, his life had fallen in pleasant places.

Then, one day, there came the messenger. He brought the news of the rising of enemies against Job, of a destruction of property, of a natural disaster. Finally came the news that his wives and children had been killed in a tornado which had struck his home. Suddenly, Job had to make room for sorrow in his faith and philosophy. He was face to face with the hour when sorrow comes.

"One day there came a messenger. . . ." Job is not alone in discovering the meaning of these poignant words. Because

trouble is the common lot of mankind, suffering and bereavement reach us all. Then is our Faith enough? What shall we do when sorrow comes?

There are several answers which we can give on the day when sorrow comes. We can allow ourselves to be completely embittered. Forgetting, perhaps, all the happiness and all the pleasantness we have enjoyed over the years, we allow life's most recent happenings to blot out all memory of the goodness of God. Blaming God, we become soured, cynical, despairing.

A vital fact to remember, as Dr. Fosdick suggests, is that it is not what happens *to* us, but what happens *in* us, that really matters. The forces of darkness and disaster can overthrow your spirit. On the other hand, you can remain master of every situation, sending all that would crush you cringing away. I like the story of the woman who faced great sorrow. A friend came to her and said: "Life's experiences do stain one's life, don't they?" "Yes, they do," came the quiet reply, "and I intend to choose the colour."

A negative spirit of resignation, which is little more than a sombre fatalism, is the response that others of us give to sorrow. Such a spirit is well illustrated by the words used in Warwick Deeping's novel, *Sorrell and Son*, when Sorrell himself learns that he has incurable cancer. Sorrell says: "I have always felt myself up against the heedless universe. It just treads on you or not. But I have kept my pigmy back stiff. I have managed to buzz a bit before it pulped me on the window pane."

There is something fine in such stoicism. Perhaps it represents the highest point that pagan philosophy can reach. To face suffering and sorrow without wincing, to be calm and brave in the presence of disaster, represents a great achievement of the human spirit. For all its splendour, however, fatalism really stops short of victory in the presence of sorrow and death.

There is another mood with which many of us face sorrow. On the surface, it looks to be Christian through and through. Indeed, we claim it is the Christian Faith expressing itself.

It is summed up in the phrase which is often used in the presence of suffering and sorrow: "It must be God's will." Yet many times, when we use this phrase, we are neither honouring God nor remaining true to the central insights of the Christian faith.

Many tragedies of life are not God's will. It is clutching a false comfort to our hearts to imagine they are. It is not God's will that a little child should be knocked down by a drunken driver and killed. It is man's will which will not deal with the liquor trade, the greatest anti-social traffic that stains our social life. It is not God's will that a young man, at the beginning of his life, should be compelled to go to war and die. It is man's wicked will which is ready to sacrifice millions of happinesses, rather than obey the Prince of Peace and love the things which make for peace. It is not God's will that people should suffer in the disasters of nature. God has placed in His universe laws by which that universe operates and warnings are given which point to the operation of those laws. It is His will that we should find His warning and be saved.

Some time ago I was present at the funeral of an old man. From his earliest childhood, he had loved and served God. His life had been almost above reproach. Over the years, in part because of a wholesome and godly ancestry, he had enjoyed the privileges of a healthy mind and a healthy body. He had known no serious sickness during the course of his long life. He had remained active and alert to the end. One evening, in his eightieth year, he returned from his church and sat in front of the fire. Then, without a struggle or any outward evidence of pain, he quietly slipped into eternity.

I believe such a life represents human life as it should be. In large measure the sufferings of man come from the abuse of man's freedom, because of personal and social iniquity. They come because heredity, which was meant to transmit that which is good, has become tainted by evil. God's will and intention are wholly good for every one of us.

Christian faith has an answer which is sufficient for the day of sorrow, because it gives us a God large enough to

explain suffering and sorrow. I am sure that the answer to the problem of pain lies somewhere within an understanding of the freedom which God has given to us all. Because God has made us free, there must be the possibility of pain as a consequence of false choices. If God has made us free, He has made us capable of growing in responsibility and sonship. To grow in freedom means living in a world in which alternatives stretch away from our feet. It means a world in which personality and character are to be fashioned in freedom.

The possibility of suffering and sorrow does not mean that God deliberately inflicts these things upon us. There is certainly the creation of a possibility of sorrow, but not the inevitability of suffering and disaster. God has made us sons, not slaves. Because we are sons and can reject the gifts of sonship, suffering can come upon us.

The companionship of God in Jesus Christ is offered to us amidst our sufferings and our sorrows. We have already looked at the story of Job. It is well that we remember the answer which came to Job in this ancient drama of his life. Job did not come to the point where he intellectually could explain all that had happened to him. But he had an answer given to him. The answer was that he saw the face of God. Seeing the face of God, he trusted. Knowing that God was with him in the darkness, he, in the end, was able to conquer his disasters.

In the coming, and dying, and rising again of Jesus is the confirmation of God's companionship with us in the day of our need. The meaning of Christ is that God is one with us. He is as near as the lowly home of Bethlehem and Nazareth; as near as a woman's pain; as near as the cry of a child; as near as a cross on a hill.

Because Jesus came, we can become certain, as it were, that we can enter into companionship with a human God. He knows our life from the inside. Because He came to Bethlehem and Jerusalem and Calvary, He has experienced it all. He understands, for example, the housing shortage because there was no room for Him in the inn. He knows what it feels like to be poor, and despised, and lonely; He has

faced human pain and sorrow, and has gone the way of all flesh to death. All this follows from our belief that Jesus Christ was God who came down from heaven "for us men and our salvation."

Whatever else we may say in the day of our sorrow, we can be certain that God is with us. His companionship can be ours. The great message of the best-known passage of the Old Testament is that God is near us in trouble. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." The last words uttered by Jesus were a promise of companionship: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

There remains to be mentioned the distinctive Christian answer to sorrow. It is that God is able to give us the victory over suffering and death. As Dr. Maude Royden once said, "I cannot give you an intellectually satisfying answer to the problem of suffering; I can do better than that, I can tell of a power to overcome suffering and death." He is able to turn the tables on evil.

If, in the presence of much sorrow and suffering, we cannot say: "It is the will of God," it must seem that we are robbed of all comfort. This would be true if it could not be added that God's power and love are such that He can take hold of that which has happened and turn it to His purpose. We should remember He has all eternity in which He may bring fulfilment to His plans. For us, it seems that any good that comes, or any wrong that has to be righted, must take place this side of death. God is not so bound by time. He has eternity in which to work for the consummation of His plans and purposes.

The supreme example of the transforming power of God is seen in the Cross of Jesus of Nazareth. The death of Jesus resulted from man's will, but God was able to take hold of it and make it carry His purposes. He was able to transfigure the place of defeat into a scene of victory. The Cross of Jesus is the supreme example of the power of God turning the tables on evil. We know now that it bears not man's meaning, but God's. The answer to the problem of

sorrow and death lies at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. There we learn supremely of the companionship of God. There we discover the power of God to transform evil into good. When sorrow comes, God is not beaten. By His grace, He can take hold of the disaster that has come and turn it to our good. This He can do, if our faith is enough.

There was once a young Negro minister who was appointed to an American town at the end of his period of training. During his first year two great desires formed in his mind. One was to build a new church and to open it free of debt. The other was to marry a lovely Negro girl whom he had met. During the next year he saw both his dreams come true. A new church was opened without debt, and he married the girl of his choice. Soon afterwards, the new church was burnt down and his young wife died. Overwhelmed, his spirit was crushed for weeks until, walking past a neighbouring church one day, he slipped in to pray. There in the quietness he met God afresh and gained triumph over the grievous sorrow of his life. Telling later of what had happened in the quietness of that place of worship, he said: "When I went into the church, all the stars had gone out of my sky. When I came out, God had lit them again."

What shall we do when sorrow comes? We shall pray for the grace to look up into the face of God in Jesus Christ, and trust, and live.

CHAPTER 10

The Perils of Prosperity

If you were asked whether prosperity or adversity represents the greatest threat to the spirit of men and women, what would you say? Each, of course, has its own peculiar perils. Yet I rather think more lives collapse morally through prosperity than by being overthrown by adversity. Certainly Jesus of Nazareth often warned against the dangers of wealth and success and prosperity. He realised that riches and material comfort can bring a peculiar challenge to the highest welfare of human life.

I thought of the warnings of Jesus when reading a statement on Australian life issued by the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches. "Australia," it says, "is face to face with the grievous problems which always accompany prosperity. False conceptions of money, sport, group and class loyalties and material comfort are dominating our life. This fact reminds us that prosperity may present graver dangers than adversity."

The Christian Faith has an answer to the perils of prosperity. If Jesus stated, as He did, that it is difficult for a rich man, a man involved in great prosperity, to enter the Kingdom of God, He did not say it was impossible. In other words, Jesus claims that there is a power which can defeat the subtle temptations of success and wealth. Our Christian Faith, here, too, is enough.

Faith drives back a fatal self-trust which can so easily develop during prosperity and success. Material comfort and strength hide from us the true danger of our human frailties. We sometimes say: "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." It is but a half-truth. Man is always at his extremity. Always his hold on life is slight and uncertain; always his strength is far less than he thinks it is; always his security is limited and partial. The realism of the Christian Faith keeps us aware of this inner helplessness which, otherwise, can so easily be forgotten.

There is a remarkable passage in Deuteronomy which can almost be called Australia's chapter. It describes the rich and lovely land which the Jews had gained after their wanderings in the desert. "The Lord bringeth thee into a good land, a land of springs of water, a land whose stones are iron . . . and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." It warns against the forgetfulness which is always a danger to a favoured, prosperous people. "When thy herds and thy flocks multiply, beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God which brought thee from bondage and fed thee in the wilderness." It tells of the subtle mood which is never far from any one of us when life goes well. Do not say, it warns, "Mine power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." It points to the greatest of all perils which face a prosperous people: "When thou hast eaten and art full, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God."

The three basic experiences which human life encounters are sin, suffering and death. In spite of all our advances in modern knowledge and scientific insight, we may remain almost as stripped and helpless as was primitive man at these points. While we may know more than he did about the psychology of evil and how, scientifically, to deaden pain, each one of us must face evil and pain when they come to us and we must gain the victory over them. Death, of course, remains as unfathomed a mystery as ever it was. We have little reason for confidence and such a meagre basis for self-trust.

The fact of our inner helplessness was vividly impressed upon me one night in the coal-mining town of Cessnock. Near to midnight my phone rang. There had been a serious fall of coal at one of the pits and one man was gravely injured. I was asked to get the aged parents of the stricken man and hurry to the hospital. Reaching the dimly lit ward, we were walking towards a screened bed when the doctor stepped toward us and drew me aside. "I can do no more," was his comment. "You must take over now!"

I remember that it seemed to me to be a symbol. The moment came when the doctor, expressing in his person the knowledge and skill of modern medical science, could go no

further. He had to look for another to carry on whose task it was to speak of God. At such a time the Christian Faith can go further than anything else in giving comfort and strength.

Our Christian Faith points us away to God Who began life, Who sustains life and Who holds human life always in His hands. It reminds us of our dependence on a Power beyond ourselves and declares to us that the Power is generous and good. The Christian Faith always reminds us that we are but creatures and that God is the great Creator. This is a belief which answers the perils of self-trust.

Another of the perils which comes with prosperity is the choking of the wells of compassion. Riches isolate, blinding our eyes to the needs and the sufferings of others. Happiness can make us uncaring towards the sorrows of others.

Jesus certainly greatly feared the power of money. In the parable of the sower some of the seed fell among the thorns and was choked by the "riches of this life." Riches choked the compassion of Dives towards the poor man at the gate and, in the end, placed him in hell. There is an astonishing amount of warning against the power of money in Christ's teachings. It all lends reliability to a traditional word which is supposed to have come down from Jesus: "Whosoever craves wealth is like a man who drinks sea water. The more he drinks, the more he increases his thirst, and he ceases not to drink until he perishes."

The great peril of money is its power to blind and distort. Francis Xavier once admitted that, in all his experience of hearing people's confessions, he had never once heard a person admit to covetousness. Apparently, we can see an unworthy love of money in other lives, but not in our own. Furthermore, a little money or a lot of money can have the same evil effect on the human spirit, if it dominates us.

I like the way in which the American social Christian leader, Rauschenbusch, revealed that false values can run through all grades of society. He once saw a notice in a factory: "It is a bad day for a young man when he first gets the idea that he can earn a dollar without doing a dollar's

worth of work for it." Dr. Rauschenbusch thought that that was fine and true, but he suggested that another sign should be put up in the Stock Exchange on Wall Street: "It is a bad day for a young man when he gets the idea that he can get a million dollars without doing a million dollars worth of work for them."

On a national scale in Australia we are in danger of succumbing to the perils of prosperity. For years we have enjoyed great economic buoyancy and a series of good seasons which have made us as prosperous a people as there is in the world today. Yet near to us, along our northern shores, are tens of millions of people who know only hunger and poverty. Yet it is easy for us to fail to see these "beggars at our gates." It is so easy to restrict wheat production because prices are not to our liking. Yet to grow less in a needy world must have far-reaching consequences. In times of its own prosperity a nation forgets the needs of others at its peril.

Prosperity and success possess a tremendous power to corrupt. So many people have been fine in adversity, only to fall in prosperity. So many nations in history have risen to greatness in days of struggle, only to be undermined and corrupted by the very success and power that their efforts have created.

Take Spain as an example. There was a time when Spain was a great nation. Through her initiative and enterprise, the New World was opened to her traders and her leaders. Almost at once the spices and the riches of that New World began to flow into Spain, inflating her economy and expanding her prosperity. But it was not long before wealth corrupted her and Spain fell from being a first-rate to being a sixth-rate power. From this position she has never recovered. Prosperity, not adversity, was her undoing.

A vivid example of the power of wealth to undermine and destroy comes from the early part of this century in the life of Leopold the First, King of the Belgians. With real idealism, he became interested in the people of the African Congo. He sincerely desired to assist these primitive people and to extend to them the benefits of civilisation. However,

once established in the region, he learned of the vast rubber potentialities of the area. He began to exploit this product. Soon his plantations were vast. Thousands of dark-skinned people were his servants and great wealth began to flow into his treasury. It was not long before he was more interested in the money that he was making than in the people he had determined to serve in the first place.

Unpleasant stories of near-slavery began to circulate. The conscience of the world stirred because of news of what was happening in the rubber plantations of the Congo. Corrupted by his wealth, Leopold denied that anything was wrong. But stories of cruelty and ruthlessness persisted. Leopold, in defence, vehemently denied all charges, but gradually he became ostracised by world opinion. He lived his last years condemned by the awakened conscience of mankind. He who had begun with such idealism, ended in considerable disgrace before the bar of world judgment. Prosperity and wealth were too much for him.

What is the answer to the dangers of prosperity? Can the Christian Faith stop the growth of a fatal self-trust, keep open the channels of compassion, and defeat corruption? A thousand lives of those who have known prosperity and wealth, yet have risen above the moral dangers which go with them, bear witness to the fact that Christian faith is enough.

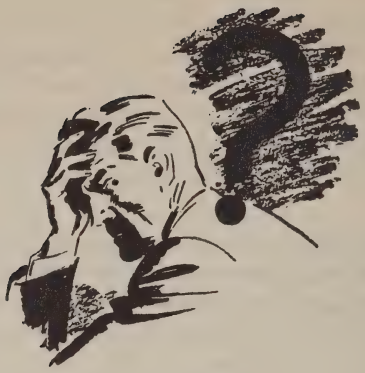
"God is the owner of all things; we are but his stewards." In this sentence from the American Methodist Book of Discipline, is one part of the answer. Jesus enunciated the principle of stewardship in the handling of money and possessions and this principle applies to all of us, whatever be the size of our banking account. He regarded all things as entrustments from God for which we must one day give an account. Nothing can be finally called our own, for all belongs to God. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Prayer is another way of defeating the perils of prosperity. Unfortunately, success so often stifles prayer. We seem so strong amid our material possessions that we can lose the sense of dependence which must be present if prayer is to

be real. Yet, if we think it out, if there is any time when we need to pray, it is when we move upward on the ladder of success and when our financial resources increase. For example, it is when a home can at last afford wall-to-wall carpets that it may, more than at most periods, need the strength of prayer. Because it operates by an attitude not of self-confidence but of trust in the living God, prayer is part of the answer.

I have always found the story of John Wesley in relation to money, success and possessions inspiring. He once enunciated a principle regarding wealth which has sometimes been criticised. The criticism, however, loses its force because his words were illustrated by his own life. He advised: "Get all you can, save all you can, give all you can." He declared that the getting, the saving, and the giving were to be determined by a Christian conscience. During a life in which his writings brought him tens of thousands of pounds, Wesley kept a careful account of his income and expenditure and he gave so generously that he died possessing virtually nothing. One of his last entries in his diary reads: "For upwards of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly. I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can and give all I can —that is all I have."

You see, there is an answer to the perils of prosperity.



CHAPTER 11

Overcoming Anxiety

How do we face tomorrow unafraid? How can we overcome an anxious spirit? For many of us, a central problem of our lives is how to find confidence and quietness. In spite of all God has done in the past and all we know of His care, we cannot escape doubt and uncertainty. We journey through our lives carrying an unnecessary burden of doubt and anxiety and fear.

Anxiety is more serious than we realise, for anxiety, as Reinhold Niebuhr claims, tempts us to sin. Becoming anxious, we place our trust in other gods. We unworthily clutch our money and possessions, having more faith in them than in God. We stoop, perhaps, to low standard living in business relations because we become unnecessarily anxious. We doubt the goodness of God and thus try to build our own world of security. We lose our way, plunging on ahead of God, goaded by our doubts and our fears.

Is faith enough to silence anxiety? Of course it is. The answer lies in the nature and the activity of God. At the heart of the Christian religion is the great Trinitarian formula, God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy

Spirit. I want to claim that in these three great affirmations lies the basis of faith.

We can trust because God is a Father Whose providence and sovereign love are over all His works. We can live in confidence because the Holy Spirit is a fact. This means simply that God is in action today in the world He has made. We can walk forward unafraid and place our hope in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, by His life and death and resurrection, shows us what life may be and offers us a power to live it. In this three-fold faith we can rest. As we go forward, we can say with St. Patrick: "I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity."

"I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth." In this first great affirmation lies the answer to anxiety and to fear. God's sovereign love and power overarch His world. God holds all things in the hollow of His mighty hands and in this fact is one basis of faith.

God rules the world. The vision of God is the beginning of wisdom. God has not abdicated from the throne of the universe. History is the story of the judgments not of men but of God. The God Whom Jesus showed to us has not brought us thus far to see all His purposes perish in the blast of a man-made hydrogen bomb. Jesus Christ has not sustained His Kingdom or His Church to see them overwhelmed by Communism or by the forces of reaction which the fear of revolution has released into the world. Also it is time we remembered that this world is not our final home. Our hope lies beyond the grave where neither hunger nor tyranny can reach, nor war break through and destroy.

If, however, God rules the world, why does evil possess such power to hurt? Can I explain it this way? I remember, when I was a boy, living on the banks of one of the northern rivers of N.S.W. One day, away in the hills, flood rains began. Soon the river was swollen and angry. Presently, it broke its banks. The flood waters spilled over the town and across the valleys, submerging the countryside. It seemed at one stage as though nothing could stop it and that all would be lost. At last, however, the flood water came up

against the contour of the land. The higher levels held it. Then, after several days, the river, its strength spent, was pushed back to its normal course.

Such a picture seems to be a parable. By his pride and his wickedness, man can break through the limits that have been set. Evil can sweep on seemingly to overcome all things. But then it is held. Something contains it. Something holds it back. It has come up against the limits of freedom that God has set for His world and for us. It has approached the moral contour of God's universe and can go no further. God's sovereign love is over all His creation.

There is something more than a general providence. The love of God reaches to every one of us, personally, individually. God does take care of us. Whatever happens around us, or to us, there can be an inner deep area of peace where God breathes quietness and strength. Nothing, nothing, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. We can repeat with Charles Wesley the confidence he expressed on the anniversary of his conversion:

"Me, me He loved,
The Son of God,
For me He died."

Two little children were standing on one occasion before an impressive picture of the King of England. There he was, sitting on his throne, with his orb and his symbols of authority in his hand. One child asked the other: "Who is that?"

"Oh, that's God," said the second child.

"What is he doing?" asked the questioner.

"He doesn't do anything; he just reigns!" was the reply.

We would have an answer for anxiety if we could believe that God not only rules the world, but is in action today. It is this belief which the Church expresses when it says: "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

Most of us, as the Rev. Colin Williams has suggested, have some mental picture of God the Father. We can imagine Him seated on a majestic throne, with the universe in His control. We can picture God the Son. We see Jesus of

Nazareth, strong, tender, performing His matchless miracles, dying in unbroken love on the cross, rising victorious from the grave, quietly standing at the door of our hearts. But the Holy Spirit—what picture can we have of a wraith-like Being whom we even call "Holy Ghost"? Yet, while we find it difficult to understand the truth of this great doctrine, God the Spirit is, in part, the answer that we need. The Holy Spirit is God in action in the world He has made.

God's Spirit is ever at work in our own lives, prompting, restraining, reminding, guiding. Everyone of us can think of moods which have stolen over us, ideas that have arisen seemingly out of nowhere in our lives, a yearning and a hunger which have come to us just when, by all human standards, we should have been quite satisfied.

You know what I am talking about. Don't you remember? You were slipping into a dishonest action and something held you back. You had just made terms with sensuality or with license, and then you suddenly yearned to be free. You had banished God from your life. You said that you had had too much religion when you were young, or the bitterness of some experience drove you from His side and you said that you were done with Him for ever. But then you were alone in your room and a voice came from the other side of the silence, and you found yourself wanting God again. You faced a difficult decision. You were driven to pray and, while you could hardly explain it, a clear certainty came concerning the course to take. You took it and it proved the right course of action. What was it all? It was God; God the Holy Spirit at work in your life, preparing for the victory He waits to give to every one of us.

Isaiah said: "He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might, He increases strength." We can face the future without fear because God has promised that strength will be given to match our need. But we must remember that the power of God is given only at the very moment of need. If we have some critical task to perform, or an operation to face, or a sorrow to overcome, God's help is not given in advance. It is when the pressure begins that His strength is increased to equal it. It is all a matter of trust. God

expects us quietly to face the future, believing that there is no human situation which He cannot meet and that, at the moment of greatest need, He will suddenly and clearly be present. Worry and anxiety could be defeated if we could only believe that God is at work in us and around us. The simple truth is that, after all, if we trust in the living God, we do not worry, and if we worry, we are failing to trust.

During 1954 the German Church arranged another of its great Kirchentag gatherings. It was held in the city of Leipzig which is in the Eastern Zone and, therefore, under Russian control. However, permission was given for laymen to come from both East and West to the Conference. More than half a million German laymen gathered for a Conference of several days.

Perhaps the most moving moment of the Kirchentag was the last session. On the arena of the Leipzig Fair grounds 10,000 young people who had come to the gathering had their own final meeting. At one end of the grounds a cross had been set up. Standing before it, these young people joined hands, row after row, stretching away from the foot of the cross into the darkness beyond. On one side was a large statue of Stalin, obviously rejected as the young people faced the cross. Then these young people, soon to scatter to the East and West, each facing peculiar challenges and pressures, said simply: "We stand for Christ. He will not let us be destroyed."

If only we could find a faith like that. If only we could believe that God not only rules, but that His Spirit is in action today, strengthening the weak, giving courage to the faint-hearted and enabling victory in every circumstance. Then anxiety would be defeated. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life."

There is another answer to anxiety. It is in a vivid belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus of Nazareth comes to us in two ways. First of all, He appears as He did in Palestine in the first century as an historical figure. We see Him as one who lived out His life, first as a carpenter and then as a preacher. He died by violence on a cross and was buried as have been all men before and since.

In the second place, He is still a Man of history, but becomes, in fact and in faith, One who has a meaning in human experience which we normally expect to belong only to God. As we watch Him, a mystery deepens. We see Him dying, yet this death was as was no other in history. We meet Him beyond death, glistening, risen. We are able to sense His living presence in our lives now. He is a Friend, all a friend may be today, except that we are unable to see Him with our physical eyes.

The central fact of the Christian Faith is not the historicity of Jesus alone. It is the Christ of history who also becomes a vital force in an experience today. It is the personal experience of Jesus as Lord and Saviour here and now which ever renews Christian faith, and explains its reality and its strength.

Many of us, however, never pass on to the second fact about Jesus Christ. Jesus remains a person of history. Being of history, He remains dead. His words come down to us because they are great words. His memory survives because it was a great memory He left behind. But He is nothing more. Many cannot say: "Jesus Christ is Lord"; they do not know Him alive today.

But Jesus is more than a Man of history. He is Saviour, Lord, Friend. To know this fact is to move towards the heart of the Christian religion. And until this inner discovery of Christ takes place in our own hearts, our religion is something we carry instead of being, as it should be, something that carries us. Until this discovery comes, our religion is a nagging conscience. We are without the power to rise anywhere near to the standards that we glimpse. Until this discovery comes, it is as though we have glimpsed a land into which we cannot pass. Until this discovery comes, there is no sense of sins forgiven and because there is no forgiveness, there is no peace of heart.

When Jesus Christ is accepted as Lord, as One who becomes an inner experience, life becomes a new thing. If there is anything that the Mission to the Nation has shown, it is that this takes place still today. I saw a young mother in Northern

Queensland come to the early meetings of a series, troubled and unhappy. On the last night she declared her faith and was able to leave the counselling room saying simply, with radiant face: "I am so happy, I could bust."

I heard of a man in South Australia who, receiving Christ, destroyed four acres of wine-grapes on his property because of his conviction that, as a Christian, he could not directly share in a trade which was wrecking personality. I received a letter from a man written one year after he had gained deliverance from a bondage to sin, saying: "I can truly say there has never been one day but that I have proved that the power of the redeeming love of Jesus Christ is in my life. I know there is a power stronger than any power in the world." I know of a prisoner in an Australian gaol who at the end of a Mission to the Nation radio programme, wrote, saying simply: "I prayed to God as you suggested. God did answer my prayer."

How can these things come to pass in your life and mine? It is by letting our lives go out in trust and love toward Jesus Christ, as Saviour. It means saying simply:

God in Jesus died for me
On the ridge of Calvary,
God in Jesus rose for me
Fair with immortality . . .
God in Jesus lives for me
Bears with me most patiently.

It means coming to the Christ of history and asking that we shall be shown that He is more than a Figure of history, that He is One who can take His place in our lives as a living power, now. It means listening to the voice of the apostle Peter when he says: "Let all your anxieties fall upon God, for His interest is in you." It means listening to the promise of Jesus: "It is expedient that I should go away from you, but I will send another Strengthener." It means discovering the living Christ who says quietly to us: "Let not your heart be troubled . . . be not anxious for your life. . . ."

CHAPTER 12

Freedom in a Divided World

Into the very centre of the world's thinking today has moved the problem of freedom. Ten or fifteen years ago freedom of thought and expression seemed secure. In the Western world Christian and democratic traditions supported the claim that men had a right to think and speak freely. But now all is changed. We have entered a new, a divided world. Because in America and Australia some limitation of freedom has taken place, the whole issue must be re-thought. Our Faith must beget freedom, if it is to match our need.

Fortunately, the New Testament gives guidance on this question of freedom. The early Christian Church had to fight for its liberty in an alien society. The first Christians were often looked upon as a subversive group and they had to think their way through this question of freedom. Peter and Paul speak much about the issue. They lay down principles which are valid for us. For example, in the first Epistle of Peter there is a notable passage: "Live like free men, only do not make your freedom a pretext for misconduct; live like servants of God. Do honour to all men; love the brotherhood; reverence God; honour the Emperor." Freedom of thought and conscience is presented in the New Testament as a supreme human and Christian value. Out of a long experience the Christian Church would agree with Patrick Henry when he says: "Give me liberty or give me death."

God has made men free, free to fall into error. This is the fundamental reason for the Christian claim to freedom. God has so made us that we can believe in Him or reject Him. You can live out your life or end it by suicide. You can accept Jesus Christ or crucify Him. You can make peace or make war. And now, with the discovery of atomic energy, it looks as if the range of man's freedom is greater than we realise, for man can even destroy his civilisation, if he chooses. God has made us free and at no point, even though

our false choices bring destruction to ourselves and sorrow to our fellows, is that gift withdrawn. Because God has made us free, we must extend freedom to each other.

The State is most nearly fulfilling God's purpose as it most truly reflects this quality of freedom towards its citizens. Society, like God Himself, must offer to its citizens the right to choose evil, the right to fall into error. To deny this freedom is to limit the meaning and significance of truth itself. The State does not exist to tell men what they are to think, or what they are not to think, but to create conditions of freedom in which men are able to think what they may.

Freedom, furthermore, is indivisible. To limit freedom at any point is to limit it. If a man cannot follow the trail of truth as he sees it, wherever it may lead, he is not free. Where there is honesty and sincerity of purpose, every man must have the right to think what he likes. Freedom is indivisible.

I shall not forget a warning given by Pastor Niemöller, when he was in Australia. He claimed that the battle for freedom under Hitler in Germany was partly lost because the Christian Church did not begin to fight soon enough. He said that Christian leadership should have seen that freedom passed into eclipse when the first attack was made on the Communists and the Jews. Christians, he said, should have realised that they would be next on the list. Society cannot be half bound and half free, for it is almost certain that the area of oppression soon spreads.

If there is anything the West needs today, it is a recovery of faith in truth and faith in freedom. Freedom involves risks, of course, but a curtailment of freedom to think freely involves greater risks. The world today urgently needs a revival of the great spirit of John Milton who, living also in a divided world, proclaimed boldly: "Let Truth and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worst in a free and open encounter? She needs no policies, no strategies; those are the shifts and defences that error uses against her power. Give her but room and do not bind her when she sleeps."

The New Testament claims that loyalty to the State and obedience to elected rulers is a secondary Christian allegiance. I say a "secondary allegiance" because it must ever be held beneath the absolute loyalty which must be given to God alone. "Do honour to all men; love the brotherhood; reverence God; honour the Emperor."

There is no doubt whatever that the Bible teaches that loyalty to God must come first. The Old Testament, in such stories as that of the three young men who would not bow to Nebuchadnezzar, puts loyalty to conscience above loyalty to the State. In the New Testament, when the issue is joined, Peter says: "We must serve God rather than men." The modern Church, through such men as Pastor Niemöller and Bishop Berggrav, has made the same claim: "The Lord is my Fuhrer."

But the Christian Church has always had a rightful fear of anarchy. It has encouraged loyalty. It has seen that the acceptance of the lawful demands of the State is basic to a wholesome society. It has taught that freedom must be held responsibly and that any seeming disloyalty to the State can only be justified in the name of a higher and nobler loyalty to God, and to truth, and to conscience.

In the light of this teaching it is clear that, if the State has the right to demand loyalty from its citizens, it must always make provision for freedom of conscience. It has the right to protect itself against treasonable acts, but not to control the thinking of its citizens. The blunt truth is that often the man who has been most loyal to his fellows, and to the State, has been the man who has had to defy its lesser demands in the name of the greater good. In other words, a true non-conformity is essential to the health of any society. Otherwise that society is on the way to stagnation and death.

Freedom is in jeopardy today not only because of official restrictions by the State. It is in danger because of the way man treats man in neighbourly relations and because of the contraction of the atmosphere of freedom in our midst, due to bitterness and fear.

There is no doubt that something new has developed within

democratic society since the end of the Second World War. The power of rumour has been heightened., There has been much loose thinking and loose talking. There has been a great deal of thinking by labels. There has grown a deepening bitterness between groups within society.

In particular, in both America and Australia, a practice has grown whereby public men publicly name and brand their fellows. It has resulted in many an injustice being done. It is a method that is unlovely and unworthy of a wholesome society. It is questionable whether any single method has done more to crucify freedom than this practice. Too often there have been groups of men and women amongst us who have been prepared to accept the unproven statement and to campaign against others on the basis of a political prejudice.

If there is any judgment the world today needs to hear, it is that expressed in the Ninth Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." The repeating of unverified rumour, the use of emotionally charged descriptive phrases and labels, the naming of men in public and in private, is all too often "bearing false witness against a neighbour." By it, freedom could almost perish in our midst.

In a divided world, truthfulness, calmness, objectivity, are the protectors of freedom and everyone of us as citizens, as Christians, can at this point help to secure freedom. Every one can think calmly and clearly, fighting back the turgid waters of emotionalism that can so easily engulf our society. "Live like free men . . . live like servants of God."

Faith in God and loyalty to God are essential to freedom. If men are to live like free men, they must live as servants of God. Why has freedom become a supreme issue in our world today? Is it only because we have been ushered into a divided world? The cause, I believe, goes much deeper. The world, to some degree, has always been a divided world. Admittedly, issues are more grievously focused today, but the situation is not completely different from that which has been faced before. Why, then, is freedom again in jeopardy?

Freedom is in peril today in the West because too many

of us have faltered in our loyalty to God and in our allegiance to the Christian faith. A world which has a strong and virile faith in God and where loyalty to conscience is regarded as a supreme heritage has no need to fear for its freedom. It is when faith dies that freedom perishes. Freedom is the offspring of faith. Oppression is the child of fear. It is when God is forgotten that freedom, in the end, is abandoned. The rejection of God, Who is truth, is the prelude to tyranny.

Without inner freedom, there cannot be freedom out in human society. Free men, who are free from the bondage of evil, make a free world.

Faith is a basic requirement. Where there is faith in God, and faith in man, and faith in truth, and faith in God's purpose in history, freedom is secure. Where there is faith in the democratic way of life and a clear understanding of its nature and goals, there is little need to fear the collapse of freedom.

Freedom, then, is an intensely personal issue. If freedom begins in the lives of individual men and women, every one of us must ask: "Does it live in me?" If we seriously begin to seek freedom within, we are soon confronted by the searching promise of Jesus: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." At the feet of Jesus Christ we learn that freedom is mediated to us by the Son of the living God.

"Live like free men, only do not make your freedom a pretext for misconduct. Live like servants of God."

CHAPTER 13

You Are Not Helpless

Many of us today live with a feeling of utter helplessness. Each world crisis of this century has caused us to drop our hands and say: "What can I do about it?" The issues are so large and complex, and the distance between us, the common people, and the leaders who make crucial decisions is so great, that we all have to come to grips with the mood of resignation or bitterness. When mighty events dwarf individual lives, the sense of helplessness is never far away from us.

In the Old Testament there is the story of a man who faced a situation just like ours. His name was Jeremiah and he lived through another of history's tumultuous, tempestuous periods. Great world powers, Babylon and Egypt, were at grips, fighting for world mastery. The events of the time made tiny Judah and the people in it seem unimportant and helpless. Suddenly, down amid the spreading chaos and terror, a challenge came to Jeremiah to do something about it. His answer was the one we so often give today: "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am but a lad. What can I do about it?"

There was truth in his complaint. Jeremiah was but a country youth, unknown and untried. Yet something further

had presently to be added. He became a man plus God. God's reply was: "Say not that thou art but a lad. Have no fear, for I am with thee, to succour thee." Then God spoke to Jeremiah of the future in terms which must have seemed to him absurdly impossible of fulfilment. "I put thee in charge this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to build and to plant." Jeremiah shows to us that individual men and women, far from the centre of events, are not unimportant nor are they helpless.

You are not helpless. In the face of a menacing world situation you need not stand mesmerised and afraid. There are certain attitudes you can adopt, certain things you can do, now. You are not helpless.

In one of the psalms there appears this sentence: "He will not be afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast and believeth in the Lord." This shows one course of action. We can escape the tyranny of the passing and threatening parade of events by believing in the sovereignty of God. We can declare our faith in the living God, active in history.

The Christian has a right to believe that standing at the centre of history and amid the events of time is a stubborn, unyielding core of reality which is the fact of God. There is an unknown factor at work in the human scene, and no one knows where it may be encountered or when its power may be exercised. As Professor Herbert Butterfield, the historian, puts it: "Man is working on material which is alive and which may rebel against him, and there is a Providence which complicates the effects of actions taken. It is this Providence which, in fact, has the last word to say about the results."

Strange to say, it is the men who have tried to ignore this fact and who have themselves tried to play God who have become most aware of its operation. Napoleon was conscious of it. Bismarck once said: "The statesman must reach for the hem of God's garment when he hears Him rustling through events." And Hitler ran into something far greater than the armies and air forces which defeated his armed forces in battle.

To believe that God is the Lord of history and that His

sovereign will is being expressed through events is to find freedom even amid the most coercive of situations. It breaks the evil spell which towering world figures and terrible events can cast over us. We do not remain helpless. Faith restores to us the initiative. We are placed in a position to act.

There are few more inspiring incidents in history than that of Augustine's response to the news that Rome had fallen. One day in the year 410 A.D. a boat appeared off the coast at Hippo, in Africa. It brought the unbelievable news that Rome, the eternal city, had fallen to the Goths. Soon a messenger from the ship burst into a room where Augustine sat with some of his priests. The man shouted: "Rome is fallen! Alaric and his Goths have sacked the city." All present were thrown into consternation until presently one turned to the old bishop for guidance.

Augustine said: "What we see today is the doom which falls upon an empire which has betrayed its sons."

Fearfully, the priest replied: "But if the earthly dominion passes away, what remains?"

"The City of God remains," replied Augustine quietly, "and the Church of God remains through which it is brought within the passing world."

You are not helpless because God is not helpless. He remains free in His world, and so can we be free. History is the story of the judgments of God. Nothing need rob us of our faith in the sovereignty of God. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

You are not helpless, furthermore, because the thoughts you think do count. You can ask God to stand guard over your mind, that you give mental allegiance only to the truth. The longer I live the more impressed I am with the importance and the power of the general mental attitude which, on every issue, settles down over society after a time. It is this climate of opinion which goes far towards determining the course of events. No leader entirely escapes its quiet pressures. It is the environment in which decisions are made and under which the life of the nations is carried on.

The important fact to realise is that each one of us has

something to do with the creation of that environment of mental attitudes. The way we read the news, critically or trustingly; the comments we make to a neighbour or a travelling companion; the unworthy or false statements about others which we challenge or allow to pass unquestioned—all these things go to make that strange, yet powerful, force which is called "public opinion." Despair of it as we may, it remains the stuff from which history is made.

Let me give an example. When China first intervened in Korea and the United Nations' forces were sent reeling backward, the world was suddenly thrown to the edge of the precipice of a third world war. I believe that we would have been plunged into that war, had it not been for the power of world opinion. Everywhere the common people quietly made up their minds that Korea, with its complex issues, with doubt about the wisdom of crossing the 38th Parallel in the first place, must not be allowed to become the occasion for world conflict. That mood forced world statesmen into new conferences. It dragged the world back from immediate catastrophe. It revealed the power of the thought-life of the mass of the people across the world.

You are not helpless. You can still think. And as we face a continuing tension in international affairs, there are some principles we can, as Christians, keep steadily before us. Here are five I would dare to suggest:

1. Remember that every Church statement for years on war has begun with the sentence: "War is incompatible with the mind of Christ."
2. Avoid all over-simplification of issues. Examine critically the news which you read and hear day by day.
3. Reject today's exaggerated trust in armed might. "Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord."
4. Remember that those called "enemies" are men for whom Christ died and for whom somebody cares.
5. Remember that the supreme concern of the Christian is not the national State but the universal Kingdom of God.

You are not helpless. You can pray, remembering the power of the thoughts we think. "O God, stand guard over my mind. Lead me to the truth."

I once heard a woman, before a huge assembly, tell of how, and why, her almost wrecked marriage and broken home were restored. She said simply: "I realised how futile it was for me to be going on praying for world peace and then to go to the courts for a divorce from my husband." She had made a most important discovery—that there is a link between the way we live day by day and world events. It is the quality of life as lived by millions of people like us round the world which does influence greatly the course of history.

The great crises and disasters of mankind do rise out of the life of the people. I know this is a claim which is hard, even impossible, to prove. Yet I believe that it is true. There is a connection between what we do, the standards we adopt, the values we obey, the life we lead, and the course of world events.

Actions do count. The greedy, grasping man helps to make a greedy, grasping nation; a godless man, a godless nation; a man careless of the truth, a nation that is prone to dishonour its word; a materialist in thought and life, a world where force is king. And if, finally, the supreme tragedy of war comes, it is but the truth about our lives and our society. It is the sin of the people brought into focus.

Thomas Carlyle was once asked who was to blame for the French Revolution and all the bloodshed it caused in France. He replied: "Everyone, large or small, who had fallen short of their public duty." If I may quote Butterfield again, "A civilisation may be wrecked without any spectacular crimes or criminals, by constant petty breaches of faith and minor complicities on the part of men generally considered very nice people."

Jeremiah, faced with the tremendous events of his own time, heard them speaking to him in terms of a personal challenge. He felt he had to do something about it. He came to believe that his life could be thrown into the scales. So can yours and mine. You are not helpless! You can, by

the grace of God, make your day-to-day living fight for peace, serve the cause of righteousness, build the Kingdom. Your life does count!

You are not helpless because, when Christ is offered your faith and obedience, He can work His will among men. All authority and power have been given to Him.

In this age, when all eyes are turned towards man's power and man's genius, we need to be recalled to the great truth that God is free to take the initiative in His world. He can stoop, picking up a man here, a word there, as His instrument, working in unpredictable ways to save us. We need to remember that He is at work now, in unexpected ways and in unlikely places. If God chooses to pick up a chance word spoken, a life can be transformed. A passing action can kindle faith and hope in another heart. A witness given can reach to the farthest boundaries. A life offered can become decisive.

The challenge in this hour is to give ourselves, believing, and to wait for what God will do because of our obedience. There is no doubt that we must continue to live amid the crises of our time. We shall probably not know a settled, ordered existence in our life time. Tension and recurring moments of great danger will remain. Yet, through it all, God will be awaiting the opportunity to re-create a perishing civilisation. He will need men and women, not numbed and paralysed by fear or hope deferred, but dedicated, obedient, believing, who will quietly wait and work for the "consolation of Israel." In other words, God will be looking for those who trust in His renewing grace and act up to the measure of their faith.

Do you know the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer? Bonhoeffer was born in 1906, accepted Christ, entered the Church, and, at twenty-four, became a teacher of theology at Berlin. Then came the Nazi challenge to the integrity of the Church. Bravely he chose to resist, stepping out from academic detachment and beginning to fight in Christ's name. Soon the Gestapo was on his track. Soon he was imprisoned. Behind the grim walls of the concentration camp, he carried on a

remarkable ministry among those who each week were led out to die. All the time he knew that his turn would come. On April 9, 1945, he, his brother and two brothers-in-law were led out and hanged. At that moment, an earlier sentence of his own, written in explanation of Christian discipleship, was fulfilled—"When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."

Bonhoeffer today, though dead, yet speaks. His life is one of the forces that is cleansing and renewing the life of the Church and the world. God has accepted his obedience, in this case even unto death, and is working His will through it.

In today's hour of peril and world need, what can you do? You can offer all you have, your life, your faith, your obedience, believing that, through consecrated personality, God can work miracles. You may say, with Jeremiah: "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am but a lad." But like Jeremiah, you can give your helplessness to God. Then you will find that you are not helpless, because God is not helpless. The challenge comes to you. I leave it with you.

CHAPTER 14

Faith at the End

Every one of us must come to terms with the fact of death. As Alex Munthe says, "We all know that we are going to die; in fact, it is the only thing that we know of what is in store for us. All the rest is mere guess work and most of the time we guess wrong."

There are two attitudes which we can adopt toward the ending of our lives. We can resolutely refuse to face the fact of death. An American psychologist advises: "Never allow yourself a passing thought of death." Away to the other extreme is the attitude of Philip of Macedon, who employed a slave to break into his room daily, saying: "Philip, remember thou must die."

Both of these attitudes are, of course, extreme. It is unrealistic not to take the inevitable ending of life into our reckoning. It is morbid and unhealthy to dwell upon it constantly. More positive and wholesome is the attitude reflected in a comment by General Smuts: "As we grow older, life comes to consist of memories—and the Great Hope."

Can we find a philosophy, a Faith which will give light at the end of the road? Is there anything which can change our shy hope that death may not be the end into a certain confidence of life beyond the grave? Can the Christian Faith be enough at the hour of the last parting? I believe it can. The Christian answer to the problem of death is the gospel of immortality. It is in the good news that life, eternal life, persists even through death. It is the faith that because Jesus lives, we shall live, too.

The Christian Faith gives us a God Who makes eternal life not only possible, but inevitable. It is because, as Jesus taught us, God is our Father in heaven and every individual life is precious in His sight that death cannot be the end.

It is very significant that only at a certain point through the Bible does faith in immortality become strong. There

is evidence that, earlier in the Old Testament, there is no clear belief in life after death at all. For example, Psalm 39 says: "O spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more." In Psalm 115 there are these words: "The dead praise not God, neither any that go into silence." The beginning of a positive faith in immortality can be seen in Job, in the great prophets of the sixth century before Christ and in the later psalms. As men came to understand more fully the nature and the purpose of God, so death was seen as a challenge to His love and purpose, and the answer came that, after all, death could not be the end.

To step into the New Testament is at once to be conscious of an atmosphere radiant with hope and certainty. Its confident faith is obvious in the great words of Jesus: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you." For Him, life after death was axiomatic. It is the natural consequence of the nature of God Who rules over all things and holds every single life in the hollow of His hand.

In other words, it is what we believe about God which determines what we believe about immortality. Let me take two illustrations. Pierre and Marie Curie, the discoverers of radium, had no faith in God. The day came when Pierre stepped from the pavement in a Paris street and was killed by a passing vehicle. His wife, Marie, was overcome with grief. After some days, she said in complete despair: "Everything is over. Pierre is sleeping his last sleep beneath the earth. It is the end of everything, everything." Marie Curie realised the inevitable consequence of her belief that there was no God. If there is no God, as Jesus showed Him to be, then, of course, death must be the end.

On the other hand, there is the prayer of a father stricken with cancer. As he faced death, he faced it in the light of a strong Christian faith. "O Father, enfold in Thy loving everlasting arms my beloved and gallant wife, my boy and my little daughters. I know that death is only the beginning of a more adventurous life. Life is sweet but into Thy hands I entrust myself and to Thy name be all glory and praise."

Confident, triumphant faith like this comes through a personal, intimate knowledge of God. It is when we know God that eternal life becomes a certainty.

The circumstances of our life, the structure of the universe, presuppose life after death. Without it, a vital link in the chain which gives reason, justice and fulfilment to the universe is missing. William Temple once put it like this: "For myself, I do not cling to life after death immensely. I do not mean that I want it for myself as mere continuance, but I want it for my understanding of life."

Without life after death, this world becomes completely irrational. We may note the significant remark of H. G. Wells, a man who logically thought through his position. In his last book, *Mind at the End of its Tether*, he says: "The dust carts of time trundle us off to the incinerator and there make an end of it." Then he was honest enough to say that, because death is the end, he must go on to confess: "The attempt to trace a pattern of any kind is absolutely futile. . . ."

If God throws away one of His most precious possessions, human personality, then all life is rendered irrational. It is no use talking about the continuance of the human race as a substitute for personal immortality. The Bible and the scientist are agreed that the day will come when life will cease on this planet. The scientist is quite certain that the day will arrive when, because of changes in the sun, this world, with its human adventure, will become silent and still. Therefore, to speak about the persistence of the human race giving meaning to life, is without foundation. It is only to delay the moment of inevitable irrationality.

Unless there is life after death, there can be no confidence in final justice. The conclusion of many issues cannot be reached within the span of life available here. If life is only three score years and ten, men *do* get away with wickedness, the murderer *is* able to escape the consequences of his crime, the extortioner *does* enjoy his greedy gain and the ruthless man of power *is* able to express his cruelty. If death is the end, it must be admitted that justice is in many cases denied.

It means also that physical force is triumphant over the spirit. If death ends all, the body is more important than the spirit, sex is more significant than love, survival is of greater moment than sacrifice, and safety and security matter more than the ideal of service.

A recent novel expresses the mind of a girl working in a factory in the early industrial era. In her groping fashion, she sensed how necessary life after death is for rationality and justice to be retained. She says: "I think if this should be the end of me and if all I have been born for is just to work my heart away with the mill noises in my ear and with my mother gone, never to see her again . . . and there is no God to wipe away all tears from all eyes—I could go mad."

Eternal life, which Jesus gives to us here and now, is such that death cannot end it. Because of the quality of life that we can already enjoy now, life after death becomes obvious.

After all, the kind of life which a Christian comes to enjoy is not bound up with material factors. It is of the spirit. Joy, peace, forgiveness, gentleness, kindness, love all exist above that which is merely material. Since they are not dependent on matter, they, in the end, escape the death of the body. The central fact of Christian experience is the knowledge of God in the human heart. Here again is something which lives outside the bounds of time and sense. Therefore, death cannot touch it.

Jesus Christ conquered death and promised that we shall, too. This is a further powerful reason for faith at the end. Two facts stand out clearly in relation to the crucifixion of Jesus. One is that he was obviously killed. As Reginald Granville has pointed out, it was not until 1837 that registrations of death became established. In the days of Jesus in Palestine there could be no certainty that anyone had died. But there was one way in which a death could take place openly and obviously. It was on a cross, before the gaze of the people. It was this fate that came to Jesus. "And sitting

down they watched Him there." The whole city knew that He died.

The second fact which stands out clearly is that the people of the first century of the Christian era who had known Jesus were convinced that He was alive after death. Nothing could shake their conviction of the truth of the message which came to them from the entrance to the empty tomb: "He is risen, as He said." We have often said: "If only someone would come back and tell us of what lies beyond the grave!" Someone *has* come back, and His name is Jesus.

You ask me: "What is the proof that we have that Jesus conquered death?" Let me paraphrase one of the answers Dr. Buttrick gives in his great book, *So We Believe, So We Pray*. The proof that Jesus lived on beyond the tomb is in life itself, the life of the living Christ. This is the only valid evidence. If a tape-recording of the Risen Christ had been kept, we would be arguing whether it was really His voice. If a photograph had been taken, we would ask: "Is it a fake?" If we had a signed affidavit, we would be fearful lest it were a forgery. The proof is in the character of the witnesses, in the transformation of the first disciples, in the victorious launching into an alien world of the frail, primitive Church and of its continuance up to this hour; and in the experience of millions, not only of yesterday, but also of today.

"He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today,
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart."

Because Jesus lives, we shall live, too. It is His quiet promise that comes down to us. In every other feature of His life, we have learned to trust His word. Jesus asserts there is life after death and that, into its inheritance, every one of us will enter. Therefore, it is upon the authority of Jesus that faith in immortality finally rests. It is upon the

word of Christ that the Christian, in the last analysis, rests his case.

. . . . . .

My Christian Faith is enough. From the beginning to the end of life, we may walk unafraid, for Christ is sufficient. At the beginning, through the varied experiences of the years and at the ending, faith in the living God, is the answer. Each of us can place our trust in Him, saying simply, always:

"My Faith is enough!"

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